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THE  
HEAVENLY VISION

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY

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## I.

### THE HEAVENLY VISION.

*"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."* — ACTS xxvi. 19.

THE Apostle had reference to the memorable crisis, which was his introduction to the Christian life. He had lived long enough to appreciate the significance of that crisis, both as to purpose and influence. In it, he had discovered the ideal, which he had been trying to realize ever since; and in it, also, he had found a sacred magnetism, which had been to him a perpetual solicitation. He had been like Moses, to whom God had revealed the plan of the Tabernacle. From Mount Sinai to the plain of the Hebrew encampment, the venerable leader had carried the plan, which skilful workmen had afterward expressed. The impression of the crisis had never ceased to control Paul. He had crossed the continents, and had encountered every variety of thought; he had endured hardships, and had passed through many eventful experiences; he had advanced from youth to maturity and thence to old age; and yet he had never lost

sight of the ideal, whose welcome invitation had called him "to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In the presence of King Agrippa and a splendid retinue, the Apostle had appeared to explain his conduct. He was a prisoner of the Romans. Jewish enmity charged him with sedition and conspiracy. He had made an appeal unto Cæsar, and was awaiting the time of his departure for the Imperial City. The Procurator, Porcius Festus, was interested in his case, and was glad of the opportunity of bringing him before his royal guests. The occasion was one of unusual magnificence. Paul was facing a brilliant court, as he stood to relate the circumstances of his life. This was not a defence. His appeal had transferred the trial to Rome. He was simply responding to the orders of the Procurator, who had summoned him from his prison to entertain Agrippa and Bernice.

With intense enthusiasm, the Apostle described his conversion, dwelling minutely upon the vision which he had, as he was on his journey to Damascus. That vision was to him a convincing argument. So evident, so satisfactory was it, that he promptly yielded his life to its control. From that hour, he had been a Christian. His subsequent career had confirmed the faith, which he then exercised, as he had practically made himself over into a new man under the influence of the heavenly vision. Thus as

he stood in the presence of royalty, his simple manhood—so heroic, so pure, so Christlike—was more brilliant than all the glitter of the pompous, licentious court. Never, for one moment, had he been disobedient unto the heavenly vision. The recompense had been secured, and Paul's life and work were its grand realities.

This same heavenly vision presents to us its glorious possibilities of purpose and influence. We may not, it is true, see a bright light and hear a divine voice upon the Damascus Road. There are many travellers who make the journey from Jerusalem to Damascus without any consciousness of visions; and yet there are many pilgrims who never visit the Holy Land, whose march is directed and cheered as they become conscious of this same heavenly vision. They share with Paul the ecstasy, and unite with him in acknowledging their dependence upon the strength. They "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." The heavenly vision commands their obedience at every step of this heavenward progress—beginning, middle, and end. It is the sun of their spiritual firmament, whose genial rays address the feeble infancy of experience with promise, the strong maturity of realization with fulfilment, and the timidity of the earthly termination of life with hope. Always present, and yet always ahead, the heavenly vision is constantly announcing new revelations, and as constantly afford-

ing new delights. Oh! that we might be led, by the Holy Spirit, to a happy appreciation of its place and opportunity! Oh! that we might exhibit the fidelity of Paul, which appeared in his noble Christian life! Oh! that we might be permitted to make his good confession: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision!" But just what is this heavenly vision? How is it possible that we, in our day and country, should accept this as our purpose and influence?

1st. The heavenly vision is the revelation of Christ. To Paul, this vision was a clear, definite manifestation of the Redeemer, which qualified him for his Apostleship. "Am I not an Apostle?" he asked as he addressed the Corinthians. "Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?" Then he declared positively, that "last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Thus he placed himself on an equality with the other Apostles, who had known Christ after the flesh. It would appear—and yet we must not be too confident—that an objective revelation was granted, that he saw with his eyes the Lord Jesus, and heard with his ears the voice of the Son of man. However that may be, it certainly pleased God to reveal His Son in him in such manner that he was convinced of the divine authority of Jesus of Nazareth. This was the essential thing. We need not press the narrative un-



duly. It is not possible that we should understand the heavenly vision as to its method. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." The methods of spiritual phenomena are always obscure, even when their results are evident. He, who is caught up into Paradise, will certainly hear unspeakable words. We must not be surprised. The revelation of Christ is for life, not for philosophical speculation, for service rather than for forms of words. "If," say Farrar,\* "we would in truth understand such spiritual experiences, the records of them must be read by a light that never was on land or sea. Paul arose another man; he had fallen in death, he arose in life; he had fallen in the midst of things temporal, he arose in awful consciousness of the things eternal; he had fallen a proud, intolerant, persecuting Jew, he arose a humble, broken-hearted, penitent Christian. In that moment, a new element had been added to his being. Henceforth—to use his own deep and dominant expression—he was in Christ—God had found him; Jesus had spoken to him, and in one flash changed him from a raging Pharisee into a true disciple—from the murderer of the Saints into the Apostle of the Gentiles."

The revelation of Christ still announces the divine realities of the Gospel. Individuals are now permitted to appreciate and to enjoy these eternal facts.

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\* "Life and Work of St. Paul." Vol. I., 193.

They make their appeal, and that appeal is within the range of a sanctified, personal consciousness. I may know, and I may know convincingly, that Jesus Christ is my Saviour, "whom having not seen I love; in whom, though now I see Him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." If this is not true, then Christian consciousness is a delusion, and Christian history is the record of the weakest credulity. For Christian consciousness is based upon a faith in the presence of our blessed Lord, and Christian history describes the fidelities of many holy spirits whose lives have been hid with Christ in God. You may ask the disciples of Jesus as to their holy aspirations, and they will answer that the Lord Jesus Christ has appeared to them. "Christ stood before me," was the confession of a devout woman, "and I saw Him with the eyes of the soul more distinctly than I could have seen Him with the eyes of the body." In such a confession, we are able to advance a little in our knowledge of this revelation. The eyes of the soul are contrasted with the eyes of the body. When we speak of seeing a person, we usually have reference to the sight which is afforded by the eyes of the body, as when we say that we see a friend upon the streets or at his own door. But that is not the only sight. The eyes of the soul can also see, as when we are asked to approve a description of virtue or grace. There are mental photo-

graphs; there are word pictures. In a proper sense, you and I see the German Emperor or the British Queen, because we have been made acquainted with their intellectual and moral characteristics. Perhaps we see them more clearly and intelligently than he does who catches a glimpse of their countenances and knows nothing of their spirituality.

We have been taught that Christ is the divine incarnation of certain most excellent qualities, that truth and goodness are present in Him, that forgiveness and mercy and love and hope are His announcements, that in His face the glory of God appears. This is the teaching of the Bible, and this teaching reaches us in the person of Christ. Can we then see Christ without seeing the lineaments of His countenance and His human form? If we may not bring back in bodily presence the Jesus who lived for three-and-thirty years in Galilee, may not Christ still be in us the hope of glory? Most certainly! The reality has frequently commended itself. As a revelation, Christ has appeared to weary, anxious souls with hope and blessing, opening to faith the splendid possibilities of life with God, and shaping life here upon the earth in every least particular. Men have seen Christ, as the artist sees his conception of statue or cathedral: as the poet sees the thought which he must elaborate in *Iliad* or *Lost Paradise*; as the musician sees the symphony, whose matchless harmonies he reduces to

the order of an orchestra. Christ is there, and we are here. The heavenly vision is evident. There is no doubt that God is speaking. The divine call awakens a response. Every energy is aroused. The pulse-beats are quick and eager, as the endeavor to apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus becomes influential. Thus Pres. Edwards—a man of unusual mental grasp—describes his own happy experience when he says: “I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God as Mediator between God and man, and His wonderful, great, full, pure, and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception.” Was not that a heavenly vision? Did he not see Christ as truly as Paul did? Can we fail to discover the influence of the heavenly vision upon the subsequent life of that great man? When the eyes of David Livingstone—one of Africa’s heroes—were opened to behold the Saviour, the strong impulse of a holy love filled his soul with most real and earnest and effective ambitions. He did not know it then, but he knew it afterward, that for him the heavenly vision meant Africa’s redemption, with the toilsome life, which he ended on his knees in the rude hut in Ilala. It was so too with Gordon, England’s lonely sentinel at Khartoum. The heavenly vision

outlined his duties to him, and then held him firmly with its divine constraint, while all the world wondered at the spectacle of courage and consecration.

“Warrior of God, man’s friend, not here below,  
But somewhere dead in the far waste Soudan,  
Thou livest in all hearts; for all men know  
This earth hath borne no simpler, nobler man.”

It is to this heavenly vision, this revelation of Christ, that I would direct your thoughts. You may believe in its reality. It is for you, as it was for Paul. What then will life mean, if once you appreciate this inspiration, if always you are controlled by your estimate of Christ?

2d. The revelation of Christ presents the ideal which is a constant solicitation to holy endeavor. This ideal is practical and at the same time progressive; it is within my reach and also ahead of me. Many of our ideals are exhausted. We quickly come up to them, and their advantages are utilized, and they are left behind. I suppose that every one has found this to be true. In childhood we had our ideals, and we look back at them now with amusement, or pity, or both. Then other ideals became influential, but they had their day too, and disappeared. Strength or wealth or beauty or pleasure or fame have all solicited us, and over each, perchance, we have raised the bitter lamentation of the preacher, “Vanity of vanities.” We will not learn



from the experience of others. Every one must become an experimental philosopher for himself. The follies and the mistakes of the generations are repeated year by year. We are no wiser than our fathers were. Our ideals are so many of them like the pot of money which is said to lie at the point of the rainbow. The earthly vision lures us on to disappointment and despair. We are seldom successful with our cherished plans, and when we are, we are not happy. The question, "Is life worth living?" is soberly discussed; and a pessimistic philosophy wins adherents in the circles of fashion and pleasure.

This should not be. Life should be sweet and interesting, progressive and spiritual. Where the heavenly vision is distinctly recognized, its powerful influence will be felt in calls to service, in bright anticipations of a future state, and in most delightful communings with God. The revelation of Christ promotes Christian optimism which is intelligently hopeful. Therefore with this conviction we can hardly fail to prize the heavenly vision. It is our ideal, whose influence we cordially respect.

The ideal meets us constantly, and is always practical. The revelation of Christ is for every age and condition, and it is within the reach of all. Inasmuch as it presents a complete salvation, its appeal is addressed to sinners everywhere. Sin is an interest which is common to the race. "All have sinned

and come short of the glory of God." There is a taint in human nature which grace must remove. No rank, no station, no ancestral advantages can secure an exemption from this condition. By the divine law of heredity we appear in the world with a sinful tendency. It is as certain that a child will sin, as it is that a child will speak. Yes! and more so. This sinful tendency antagonizes God and the authority of God. Its selfishness is conspicuous. Without restraint, it develops into immorality, and crime, and death. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." In and of itself it is hopeless. Facing the wrong way, it advances, with more or less rapidity, to despair and remorse. There is but one hope, and that is given in the revelation of Christ.

This revelation—the heavenly vision—meets sin in all its stages with pardon, renewal, and perfect holiness. A child may respond to this ideal, and many children have. Their determination to accept Christ has been the earnest of a happy life. Under His guidance they have formed strong and beautiful Christian characters. The traits which He exemplified have been secured by them in the progress of the years. They have "grown up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ." He has always been kept in view. Every interest has been referred to Him. The plan of life has been definitely conceived, and the important work of life-

building has gone steadily forward. What a splendid career has thus opened before childhood! Christ. The child is to be like Christ. He may occupy this or that sphere of life; he may engage in this or that pursuit; he may be rich or poor; he may be merchant, farmer, lawyer, scholar, soldier; but he must be increasingly like Christ. And what does this mean, except that he must be transferring to himself and appropriating "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report"? Christ is a generic, personal expression, which covers every desirable characteristic. The Christian should exhibit the finest types of manhood or womanhood. A base Christian, a mean Christian, an impure Christian! What shall we say of such? They travesty the Gospel, and bring reproach upon the Master, whose name they bear. Christ is nobility and large-heartedness and purity. He rebukes our miserable selfishness, and calls us ever to

" Nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws."

How gladly then do we encourage childhood to choose Christ as the only perfect ideal! How delightful it is to see youth advancing toward the perfection which Christ reveals! We want nothing less;

we can be satisfied with nothing less. Let the end of their conversation be "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

Then what a grand encouragement the heavenly vision is to the wasted, dissolute life! Alas, that we must say so, but the Parable of the Prodigal Son is as fresh and pertinent as an item in the daily paper. The far country is populous, and the journey thereto is as direct as the route of a trunk-line. The law of degeneracy is painfully evident. With or without their portion of the estate, so many of the sons of God leave the Father's house to waste their substance with riotous living. Often we meet them in despair, poor, ragged, forsaken, with nothing to eat but the wretched husks, which are fit only to feed swine. Now, what can we say? What vision can we offer them? Will they be received if they return in their rags, after these years of wickedness? Can they find their way back to the Father's house? Is their condition hopeless? No! We may speak of the heavenly vision; we may encourage them to look for it; we may assure them that a welcome will be theirs; we may even convince them that they may be washed, that they may be sanctified, that they may be justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Surely that is good news! Think of what it would have been to the Prodigal Son in his misery and loneliness among the swine, if

one of noble aspect, and generous resources, and tender sympathies had appeared to say: "My brother, this is not the life for you. You are wanted in the old home. There a welcome is prepared for you. I will be your companion. In time, you may become as noble and generous and happy as I am." Think of the influence of such an assurance! Yet precisely that—yea, and much more—meets every wayward, profligate life, when Christ is present. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Another phase of the subject appears when service is considered. The heavenly vision is a call to service. John, the aged Apostle, appreciated the Gospel when he wrote: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The Gospel is love, and the love of the weak, of the stranger, of the degraded, of the enemy. Around this estimate of the Gospel, the bright Christmas legends, known and read of all men, have grouped themselves with the evident design of enforcing the truth that Christ is served in the service of humanity, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Among these legends, I recently found one which is associated with the ancient Saxon custom of burning the yule-log "to keep the divine in-



fant from the cold." A selfish man, who had plenty of money, but no sympathy, was keeping his Christmas all alone, and out of deference to the day, he kept a little log burning with a very feeble flame. As he shivered in the chilly atmosphere of his desolate room, he fell asleep and dreamed. In his dream he heard a voice which drew his attention to a beautiful child who stood near to him, and said, "Jesus is cold." With an impatient movement, the selfish man stirred the fire a little, and said: "Why don't you go to the farm-house down the lane? You'll be warm enough there." "Yes!" replied the child, "but you make me cold. You are so cold." "Then what can I do for you?" "You can give me a gold coin." With a great deal of reluctance the money-chest was opened, and a gold coin was given to the child. He took it. Instantly the dingy room became bright and cheerful as the child hung up some laurel and holly, saying, "These are for *life*," and placed two candles on the shelf, saying, "These are for *light*," and stirred the fire, saying, "That is for *love*." Then the door was thrown open, and a poor widow, and a sick man, and orphan children were brought in and seated at a beautiful repast, while the child kept saying, "Jesus is warm now," and the selfish man found that he was enjoying the scene, so that he presently confessed, "I think that I am warmer too." But the child suddenly disappeared, and in his place there was a divine

Presence, and solemnly the words were pronounced :  
“ Although I am in Heaven, I am everywhere ; for everywhere is Heaven if I am there. I can not suffer as I once suffered, but whenever my children are cold, or hungry, or persecuted, or neglected, I suffer with them : and whenever they are warm, and fed, and sheltered, and loved, I rejoice with them. So that Jesus is often cold, and Jesus is often warm.”

Looking into the faces of your fellow-men, can you see the possibility of the Christ-likeness there ? Looking beyond the seas to distant continents, and to races hardly known, can you believe that Christ calls you to bring them out of heathenism into the glorious liberty of the sons of God ? Looking at the grave problems of social life, can you realize the responsibility which Christ puts upon you in this behalf ? Looking at yourself with your equipment of talent and influence, can you hear any message from the skies which commands you to serve ? If so, then do you behold the heavenly vision. You are not dependent upon the fancy or caprice of men. You are not recompensed by the returns of effort. A grand ideal has presented itself. You are conscious of a divine inspiration. Your truest recompense is this glorious fact, that you, a poor mortal, that you, a creature of yesterday, are associated with the infinite God in the accomplishment of the plans for whose consummation He gave His own dear Son. God grant us

all a clear perception of the vision so heavenly! May we make it both purpose and influence, and thus serve our generation until we fall on sleep, and are gathered to our fathers!

3d. A constant solicitation to holy endeavor met a response in Paul, whose significance was expressed by his splendid life. "He was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." In other words, and more positively, he was faithful. The heavenly vision captivated him. He surrendered absolutely to its control. Friends were forsaken when friendship meant the denial of Christ. Pharisaism with all its worldly preferment was despised in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Ease was exchanged for hardship. Perils were freely encountered. Prisons and dungeons became familiar. And for what? In order that Paul might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. Was he wise? Was his life a success? Did the heavenly vision lure him on to disappointment? Consult his biographer and answer; read his letters and know; consider his influence, and appreciate its permanent, pervasive strength, as the bounds of Christendom are enlarged. Paul wrote his life upon the centuries, and above his name there stands but one, and that is the name which is above every name—the name of Jesus.

Shall we share with him the service, the joy, and

the crown, if we are not disobedient unto the heavenly vision? Most assuredly, because God is no respecter of persons. The promise is for us, as it was for Him. We may see Christ. Are we watching for Him? Would we know Him if He should appear? May we hope to keep to Him faithfully? The Holy Spirit waits upon our response to questions such as these. He can open the sightless eyes, and He can train the soul to see the unseen things. He can give steadfastness of purpose and fixedness of endeavor. He can enlarge experience and quicken faith. He can do what was done for Moses, when from the top of Pisgah, the Land of Promise was made known. He can anticipate the hour of death, which to the Lawgiver was the hour of vision; and He can bring this revelation of Christ to the soul's perception, when the feet are upon the threshold, and the years have just begun to be numbered. Welcome, then, the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. Yield cheerfully to its control. Make Christ your choice. Regard the heavenly vision. Greet its sublime inspiration. March under its glorious leadership. Other ideals—minor and subordinate—will be reached and left behind you in the advance. This never. Like the star that led the wise men of the East, it conducts always to Christ. When you have reached His perfection, when your strength is His, when your beauty is His, when your resemblance is complete, then may you speak of

other and grander ideals. But then, in that happy consummation, you will be with the multitude which no man can number, whose hearty sympathy is their adoration of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. There the ideal will never more be questioned, for purpose and influence will be one in Christ.

## II.

### THE RELIGIOUS OPPORTUNITIES OF SUBURBAN LIFE.

*"And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there."*—MATTHEW  
xxi. 17.

BETHANY was a suburb of Jerusalem. Many lawyers and merchants of the city resided there. The town was pleasantly situate upon the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. It was reached by three roads—one of which was the highway to Jericho and the country beyond the Jordan. A grove of palm-trees afforded a delightful shade in the Summer; while the overhanging cliffs were a secure protection against the rough winds of the Winter. In the distance, the Peræan hills were visible, and the foreground of the landscape was made attractive and beautiful by the orchards and gardens, whose fertility was contrasted with the barrenness of the Desert, which was constantly invading the territory of "the house of dates."

The population of Jerusalem could not be accommodated within the walls of the city. Numerous

public buildings occupied many desirable locations, while the ordinary business—religious, political, military, and commercial—pressed the home-life of the more wealthy citizens out through the gates to enjoy the villas which had been built upon the surrounding hills. Roman law gave safety to the unwalled towns of Judea. The Jews quickly appreciated the favorable opportunities which were thus presented to them. They could secure the advantages of their sacred city without encountering the disadvantages of a city life. The Temple was accessible. The courts of law were within easy reach. The libraries were open to them. The shops and the exchanges were not far away. The suburbs became attractive. Lightfoot—a careful scholar—warrants the statement that “if there were no gardens in Jerusalem, there was a girdle of them, reaching from its very walls and down the valleys, and up the opposite hillsides. On the hills around rose the mansions of many citizens, and at the bend, where the valleys of Kidron and Hinnom met beside the Pool of Siloam, the eye regaled itself with the wide and rich verdure of the royal gardens.”

Bethany was the suburban home of the friends of Jesus, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. They were evidently persons of consideration, for many of the Jews came from Jerusalem upon visits of sympathy after the death of Lazarus, and the spikenard with which



Mary anointed the feet of Jesus was very costly. In this home, the duties of religion were not neglected. The divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures was recognized, and the precious truths of that sublime revelation determined the life of the family. Jesus was cordially welcomed to their hospitality, and an especial interest was manifested in His conversation. What incident is more suggestive than that given by Luke, when he introduces the practical Martha, busily engaged in providing for the entertainment of their guest, and the contemplative Mary, completely absorbed in listening to His speech !

Six days before the Passover, He arrived at the dwelling of His friends, and there He remained, coming back every evening from Jerusalem, until the morning of the memorable Thursday which witnessed His departure for the Paschal Supper and the sufferings of Calvary. On that morning He sent two of His disciples into the city to make all necessary preparations, and at a later hour of the day He left Bethany to meet "the twelve" in the designated "upper room."

The retirement of Bethany was evidently grateful to Jesus. When He crossed the brow of the Mount of Olives, or passed around its southern shoulder, He left the angry controversies of Scribes and Pharisees, and found the peaceful companionship of sympathizing friends. Thus He gave a tacit commendation to



the life which we, my friends, have learned to prize, and suggested an inquiry into the proper influence of a suburban residence upon Christian character. This theme—certainly quite practical—may properly engage our attention at the present time. We are living near to a great city, and yet we are living in the country. Are there advantages in a suburban life which should be appreciated and improved? With a clear recognition of some of these advantages, I may hope, by a few suggestions, to stimulate your thoughts. Christian character is affected by its environment. How may we secure the best results from our surroundings?

1st. The works of God are constantly announcing the divine presence to suburban life. It is a rare privilege to live in the midst of God's works. Perhaps they become common things to those who are very familiar with them. Yet they are not the less instructive on that account. Some of the most precious things become commonplace when they are abundantly possessed. Friendship is not always valued at its proper estimate; health is never appreciated until sickness comes; the daily benefits of life, fresh air, food, water, sleep, appear very desirable when once we are deprived of them. It is so with the works of God. There are many persons who do not seem to consider them in their intelligence and beauty. They have eyes, but they see

not. Sensibility is dormant. No response is given to the appeals of nature. The landscape suggests the market price of broad acres or of garnered grain, but offers no hint, to minds like these, of the wisdom and power which raised the mountains and traced a path for the watercourses, which clothed the meadows with verdure and called the spreading oak from the recesses of an acorn. There is a sad loss here, which remands to poverty not a few of the men who suppose that they have become very rich. With all their wealth of territory or estate they do not have as much profitable enjoyment as the reverent man has who "looks up from nature to nature's God."

"To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings with a mild  
And healing sympathy that steals away  
Their sharpness ere he is aware."

The Hebrew conception of nature, as we meet it in the Psalms, was remarkably influential. God and the works of God were intimately associated. They never supposed that these works could have any existence whatever without the presence of God. God was very near to their consciousness. They were not skilled in the methods of science; and yet the meth-

ods of science, which bring to light so many of the hidden things of nature, need not keep us from the endeavor to sympathize with their spirit. On the contrary, every new announcement of science is fitted to add to our appreciation of the wisdom and power which are capable of such wonderful expressions. The universe is broader, the reign of law is far more extensive, the authority of God is more sublime than the Hebrews could have imagined. Yet with their spirit we may keep pace with the advance of discovery. A constant recognition may be given to God. In the heavens we may behold His glory, and in the firmament we may discover His handiwork. Each season may bring us new intelligence of His fidelity to the ancient promise that seed-time and harvest shall not fail, and each morning may come with a fresh benediction from Him, who is our exceeding joy; the plants and the flowers may have their appropriate lessons, and the animals and the birds may suggest many profitable reflections. The book is always open. There are no restrictions with reference to study. God invites. The opportunity is ours. May we not always enjoy the reward? "I would not," says one who has used his suburban life to the best advantage, "I would not for all the comfort which I might get from the books of the Alexandrian Library, or from the Lenox Library, give up the comfort which I get out of nature. Nature,

now that I have had the revelation of God which interprets it to me, I would not give up for anything. I had almost said that I would rather lose the Bible than to lose my world. There is no sunlight that does not say something to me of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no created thing that does not say something to me of God, who framed it. . . . There is nothing that grows, no weed, no grass, no flower, no fruit, that is not in some way related to God in my thoughts; and I am never so near to Him as when I am in the presence of His works, as when night or day I am in that solemn cathedral, the world of nature, and behold its everchanging beauty."

Here are certainly privileges which no one of us should neglect. We can not dispense with the interior, the more spiritual processes of grace—of that, I am well aware. No one can prosper as a Christian, if he fails to use his Bible and to wait upon the ordinances of the house of God. Yet, on the other hand, we shall lose a freshness and vividness of experience which will add greatly to the interest of religion, if we do not consider the works of God.

2d. In its contact with the natural world, suburban life finds many suggestive comments on the truths of the Gospel. Our Lord delivered most of His discourses in the open air. From the objects around Him and from the phenomena of nature, He drew His illustrations. These illustrations cover truths,

which announce themselves when the illustrations are interpreted. Consequently, a Bible student must be a student of nature. One of the best commentaries is Dr. Thomson's "The Land and the Book," a volume that places side by side the descriptions and references of the Bible and the life and customs of the Holy Land. But we need not visit the Holy Land in order to discover the hidden meaning of these divine statements. The processes of nature are much the same the world over, and here at home we may constantly gain instruction as we read together the two volumes of the divine Author. I should require an abundance of time and an ability which I do not possess, if I should propose to open this subject to you in every particular. I shall be satisfied if I can convince you of the possibilities—so rich and fruitful—that wait upon your personal endeavors in this direction. For after all, what we learn by personal endeavor is permanently helpful to us. The man who has discovered for himself the significance of one of these sacred analogies will be eager to add to his knowledge by new discoveries. He will fill his mind with the words of Christ, even when those words are mysterious to him, and then he will gladly find that nature has a key, which unlocks the mysteries and permits him to welcome the truth. Thus he will live in expectation. His walks abroad, through meadows, gardens, or forests, will be as interrogative

as are the walks of miners when they hope to be able to locate a claim.

Perhaps I may aid you somewhat, if I develop the methods of this study by a single reference to a comparison used by our Lord. He was preaching in Galilee, and in the early spring. The hills were carpeted with flowers, and His audience were seated upon them. In the midst of His sermon He said: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The lilies were there to enforce the great and important lesson which their Master was announcing, and they are still present to offer Him their service. Without toiling, without spinning, with none of the fret and worry which are so common in human life, they grow to their own appointed perfection, and that is the beauty of form and the delicacy of fragrance which no royalty can command. Simply by fulfilling the law of nature, simply by utilizing the opportunities of nature, the lily matures and presents its flower. Who can fail to grasp the thought of the great Teacher? The lily is true to itself, and to God—hence the perfection; while man with his neglects and self-confidences is always striving after some ideal which he never attains. Let him learn obedience of the lily. Let him determine to respect God's method of growth in the



spiritual life; and then let him await calmly and hopefully the promised result. "He that believeth shall not make haste." We are to grow up into Him in all things, and growth requires time. Let us not expect too much of young disciples. Jesus said that the seed in the good ground brought forth fruit with patience; and at another time, He said to His anxious disciples, "in your patience, possess ye your souls." Ah, friends, "ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

The beauty of the lily, we can not fail to notice, is a living beauty. The lily borrows no splendor from colors which are not its own. The raiment of Solomon, magnificent as it was, could be exchanged for the rags of a beggar. Many a king has been stripped of the purple. But the living beauty of a holy character is as real and as personal as is the adornment of the lily. It can never be taken away from the Christian. While it is most attractive in the conspicuous positions of earthly honor and renown, it is equally attractive in the humble abodes of poverty, in the wards of hospitals, in captivity, in dungeons. There is nothing artificial in the character which can thus manifest the grace of God.

Then our dear Lord directs attention to the individualizing features of the divine interest, "like *one* of these,"—even one lily, surely an insignificant ob-



ject!—is regarded by God. “We take up at random,” the botanist remarks,\* “any single plant from a whole meadowful, and we find that it is as complete in all its parts, and as admirably adapted for its purpose, as though it were the only object in the universe; and untold millions of such flowers are born and die every year in lonely places, where no human eye beholds them, and their sweetness seems to be wasted on the desert air.” Is there no encouragement in this assurance? Who does not sometimes feel that his poor life is of very little account, and that even God must overlook him? We seem to be lost in the mass of humanity. There are so many persons in the world, and we are so insignificant! “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” Is the individual considered, or is consideration reserved for the race? May *I* pray, and will God hear *me*? Shall *I* live forever, and is there a mansion in the Father’s house for *me*? Jesus answered these questions by pointing to the lily, “like one of these,” even one. “And if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, oh, ye of little faith?” Yes! we may trust Him. Like the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep, and calls His own sheep by name, He regards us individually, so that we may

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\*“Two Worlds are Ours,” p. 5.

joyfully say, as Paul did, "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*."

The lily in the field is but one of many lilies, while the lily in the sick-room, or upon a mission of friendship, is performing an especial service. And is not this also true of every life that has been made beautiful by God? That life adds to the homage which God receives from men, so long as it is but one of many lives in the Church; but when it brings itself for helpfulness, or sympathy, or strength, or counsel, into contact with the needy and the suffering, it discovers a peculiar, a distinct, a personal interest, which offers unusual homage. Thus an ordinary confession of Christ is most welcome, while an extraordinary exhibition of love in service is doubly welcome.

We need not pursue these analogies. You understand me now, I trust, when I say that the natural world presents many fresh comments on the truths of the Gospel; and not simply on the truths of the Gospel, but on all portions of the Word of God as well. Our contact with the natural world becomes an expositor. How much more meaning there seems to be in this out-of-doors book, the Bible, when we study it out of doors. "Thy righteousness," exclaims the psalmist, "is like the great mountains." What a sublime comparison! How suggestive! Yet it needs the mountains to make it evident. How can a man of the pavements, who never sees a moun-

tain, grasp a thought like this? How impressive the thought is when it is considered in the presence of some bold, ragged, moss-covered cliffs like the Palisades! "Thy judgments are a great deep"; without the ocean to send back an answer, what will our inquiries into the meaning of that magnificent simile avail? "With Thee is the fountain of life"; where but to a living spring shall we go to gain an appreciation of the outpouring, effusive nature of life, which finds its perennial source in God? Thus the opportunities of suburban life become very precious to the student of the Word. He walks abroad in pursuit of knowledge, and he returns with confirmations of the divine origin of the sacred volume, which are more eloquent to him than the grapes of Eshcol were in the camp of Israel, when they were presented in proof of the fertility of the Promised Land.

3d. Christian fellowship discovers its sacredness in the intimacy of suburban life. Now, I shall be diverted from my purpose, and shall consume valuable time, if I undertake to meet the complaints which often arise respecting the reserve, the distance, or the unfriendliness of suburban life. They are real, and I regret that they are. But they are not peculiar to suburban life. The city is well acquainted with them. There is no place in the world where one can be as lonely as in a great city; there is no solitude like the solitude of a great crowd. And then, too,

we are apt to think that the small talk, the common gossip, which happens to concern our affairs, is the worst, the most contemptible small talk and gossip that can be heard. Yet we have only to cross over to the next town to match it; or we have only to commune with the past to discover its successful rival. The government of the tongue, alas, it is not one of the lost arts; it is still one of the undiscovered arts. We may not hope to witness its beneficent, practical rule, until there is a complete submission to God of the human heart: for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Without the exercise of a critical spirit, however, we may readily appreciate, I imagine, the sacredness of Christian fellowship, where intimacy is possible. And the circumstances of life, the informality, the quiet, the leisure, which a suburban residence allows, are most favorable to the maturing of friendships. Christian character develops in connection with friendship. The early Church was a brotherhood. We lose a great deal when we lose the stimulating energy of religious conversation. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We must learn to converse. It is easy to talk; but talking is not conversation. Most of our talking is about individuals, while the best of our conversation is upon themes. When the two disciples were on their way to Emmaus they communed to-

gether. Their communion was not a recital of personalities about Peter, James, and John, but an earnest consideration of the sublime truths of the Lord's death and resurrection. We need more of such communion. These high themes must become a part of familiar speech. I see no reason why the countenance should assume a solemn aspect, and the voice assume unnatural tones, when we converse about "Jesus and His love." Let us be frank and ingenuous, brethren! Let us encourage holy conversation. Let us welcome the questions of children. Let us prize the mature wisdom of old age.

"For conversation, choose what theme we may,  
And chiefly when religion leads the way,  
Should flow, like waters after summer showers,  
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers.  
The Christian, in whose soul, tho' now distress'd,  
Lives the dear thought of joys he once possess'd,  
When all his glowing language issued forth,  
With God's deep stamp upon its current worth,  
Will speak without disguise, and must impart.  
Sad as it is, his undissembling heart,  
Abhors constraint, and dares not feign a zeal,  
Or seem to boast of fire he does not feel.  
The song of Sion is a tasteless thing,  
Unless when rising on a joyful wing,  
The soul can mix with the celestial bands,  
And give the strain the compass it demands."

Thus writes Cowper of the nobility of conversation I would, my friends, that we might appreciate it. We prize these friendships. They are sincere. We dis-

cover their strength when life's emergencies present themselves. Oh, that we might realize the best results of friendship in a generous, spiritual improvement!

4th. Suburban life affords unusual advantages for reading, meditation, and prayer. We have the time which city life does not allow; we escape many of the temptations which city life presents. Yet we hear the roar of the city; we feel the beating of its pulse; we catch its thought as quickly as it is coined. Distance from the city means dulness. But suburban life is not distant. It is of the city, and yet not in the city. Therefore, under its own conditions it must mature. Reading, meditation, and prayer are all possible. Reading fills the mind with the treasures of thought. The past and the present meet in reading. Books are cheap. The noble spirits of other ages and lands become the companions of the man who reads. The interest in such companionship should and may be cultivated. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." God permits us to enjoy this great privilege, and in this way to secure a wisdom that is from above. Be careful, then, in your selection of reading. Select your reading, as you properly select your friends. An introduction commends one as an acquaintance, and an acquaintance may become a friend. Let it be so with books. Indiscriminate reading is as bad as indiscriminate contact with mankind. Wait a



little. Life is too short and the mind is too sacred to be abused. Many books may be disregarded entirely, while a few books will repay close study. Emerson has said that "Nature is much our friend in this matter. Nature is always clarifying her water and her wine. No filtration can be so perfect. She does the same thing by books as by her gases and plants. There is always a selection in writers, and then a selection from the selection." Let us try and be wise. We want the best.

Then with reading we should associate meditation. After the Apostle had urged Timothy to "give attendance to reading," he added the counsel, "meditate upon these things." Reading resembles eating, and meditation digestion. By eating, food is received into the body, and by digestion it is assimilated; by reading, truth is received into the mind, and by meditation it is appropriated as experience. Until we meditate upon truth, we do not really possess it. The quiet hours of the Lord's Day are especially favorable to meditation; and he who loses this blessing of holy time, deprives himself of a rare privilege. For this reason, as well as for others, we should guard the sacredness of the Lord's Day. No men need it more than the men of active business pursuits. Seven days of work, seven days of material interests, seven days in the smoke and grime of the world, seven days with care as a despotic master, who could endure



the ceaseless round with lash and spur to keep him ever at his utmost speed! God is merciful. He gives a rest. The seventh part of time is consecrated to man's supreme, eternal interests. In meditation, sweet and peaceful, let us spend the hours of the hallowed day, going from them to resume toil with the consciousness that we carry with us the smile of God.

“The spirit of the holy eve  
Comes through the silent air  
To feeling's hidden spring, and wakes  
A gush of music there.  
And the far depths of ether beam  
So passing fair, we almost dream  
That we can rise and wander thro'  
Their open paths of trackless blue.

“Each soul is filled with glorious dreams,  
Each pulse is beating wild,  
And thought is soaring to the shrine  
Of glory undefiled!  
And holy aspirations start,  
Like blessèd angels from the heart,  
And bind—for earth's dark ties are riven—  
Our spirits to the gate of Heaven.”\*

Then prayer becomes the natural language of devout, appreciative feeling. The call to prayer is not the voice of muezzin from some lofty minaret, nor the tones of swinging bell from the church spire, but the prompting of the heart. On bended knee, in silent closet, the child of God pours out his aspirations and

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\* George D. Prentice.

his love, and invokes a blessing which God only can bestow ; and then in many quiet moments of the day, when the eye is filled with the beauty of the divine workmanship ; at the evening sunset, when the horizon glows as if it had become, indeed, the vestibule of Heaven ; beneath the stars, when the pale light, so soft and soothing, seems almost like the greeting of distant residents of other worlds, prayer discovers its blessedness in brief ejaculations of adoring wonder, in restful communings with the Father of spirits, in earnest entreaties that grace may abound.

Under influences such as these, the religious life matures with strength and symmetry. God's Word is the Book, and our meditation upon its truths is sweet, while prayer clarifies the spiritual vision to discover new realities in the sacred Word, and promotes a fellowship which we have with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Our walk to Bethany has suggested a theme which, while unusual, is still pertinent. God has blessed us, my friends, with opportunities of spiritual improvement, which we should appreciate and improve. Ours is a Christian suburb. The men who organized this community were wise in making the church central to its life. We who have come after them have endeavored to be true to their good purpose. Kindly influences prevail. The name of our divine Redeemer is the magnetism which secures our prosperity

and happiness. Consider these opportunities. How are you using them? "Freely ye have received, freely give," our Saviour said. Do you recognize the obligation? God desires your service. Are you rendering it? By and by you will leave us and these pleasant surroundings, leave us on that journey from which no traveller returns. What then will you carry with you? What results will you present as the recompense of your favored life? We shall meet at the Day of Judgment,—you to answer for your fidelity, and I to answer for mine. Oh! brethren and friends, what will be the joy of that great day, if we shall all meet on the right hand, if we shall all hear the "come, ye blessed!"

### III.

## THE DIVINE ESTIMATE OF MAN.

*"How much then is a man better than a sheep?"—*

MATT. xii. 12.

A GOOD question is an argument in itself. It covers the truth as completely as an elaborate statement can, and then sends it on its mission with the impetus of a projectile. The great teachers of antiquity made frequent use of this method of instruction. Solomon among the Hebrews and Socrates among the Greeks were illustrious examples of the power which a wise man may exercise by asking questions. The Rabbinical schools of Jerusalem undertook to train their pupils in this most delicate art, and as a consequence the streets and market-places of villages and towns throughout Judea and Galilee resounded with the angry disputes which these skilful questions aroused.

When Jesus appeared, He entered heartily into the life of His time. There was nothing of the John the Baptist about Him. Where men were accustomed to congregate, there He presented Himself, and the themes which were of pressing interest were the themes which He wished to discuss. His attitude in

the Temple, when He was only twelve years of age, was prophetic of His entire career; for He was seated in the midst of the learned doctors, and He was both hearing them and asking them questions. As soon then as it became generally known that He could speak with authority, His instruction was eagerly sought. "The common people heard Him gladly." He met the unuttered desires of their hearts, and encouraged them to a familiarity, which quickly became expressive. Thus He was able to correct their erroneous opinions, and to confirm their faith. He was considerate, and yet firm. The law of God had been covered by the rubbish of their traditions, and He wished to bring it to light in its simple beauty; it had been perverted by their false interpretations, and He wished to place it clearly before them as a divine thought. Especially was this the case with reference to the law of the Sabbath—that grand, salutary law, which is essential to the best interests of intelligent beings. Jesus sought to restore the Sabbath to its original position in the divine economy. He endeavored to make it spiritually effective, to give it once more to man as the brightest, the most helpful day of the week. In this endeavor, however, He was met by the most intense and bitter opposition. Questions and answers flew thick and fast whenever He touched upon this important subject.

Upon one occasion in a synagogue of Galilee, He

met a man with a withered hand. The Sabbath question was then prominent, and His opponents were very anxious to find Him guilty of some gross violation of the law. Pointing to the man, they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" His prompt reply was a question which drew their attention to the approved conduct of a shepherd whose sheep had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath. Did he not lay hold on it, asked Jesus, and lift it out? What else should he do? What else would the Word of God teach him to do? Without waiting for a reply, He instantly raised another question, which covered the whole case and was itself an unanswerable argument. "How much then is a man better than a sheep?"

In this way, Jesus exhibited the divine estimate of man. He directed attention to a shepherd's interest in a sheep. When the exalted character of man's life is considered, it is certainly reasonable to believe that God must regard man with a solicitude as genuine as that which a sheep receives from a shepherd. At once, therefore, we are permitted to use the many references of our Lord to the shepherd life of Palestine, as we undertake to acquaint ourselves with God's estimate of man.

1st. Jesus speaks of a sheep as the property of a shepherd, and of man as belonging to God. In the beautiful parable, which John alone has recorded, the

ownership of the shepherd is particularly emphasized. There may be assistants, or hirelings, who are appointed to protect and to lead the flock, but the shepherd is the owner. "To him, the porter openeth; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice." What could be more personal? The sheep knows the shepherd, and the shepherd has a name for the sheep. From the midst of other flocks he can quickly separate his own, as he moves away with a clear, shrill call. Then, in time of danger, he is ready to risk his own life in defence of the sheep. "Thy servant," said David to Saul, "kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." "The good shepherd," Jesus remarked, "giveth His life for the sheep." They are His property. He will not suffer them to be taken from Him. "I lay down my life for the sheep." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Now, it is quite impossible for any one to read that parable without inquiring as to God's personal



interest. What can it mean, if it does not teach that God regards us individually, and that God claims us as His own? God is infinitely great and glorious and the affairs of the universe require the constant watchfulness of the Divine intelligence. There is an eye that never sleeps, and an activity that knows no cessation. The providence of God is the hand upon the helm, whose judicious pilotage secures safety and a desirable progress. We are not driven to and fro by the winds of chance, and we are not borne irresistibly by the strong currents of fate, because God rules. In His estimate, human interests are very precious. Our earth is small in bulk, the Bethlehem of worlds, indeed, and yet its moral quality, its spiritual importance must outweigh the vast size of planets which have upon them no intellectual life. Science confirms revelation in thus elevating a reasonable and responsible being to the position of honor and dignity. The relative value of worlds can not be estimated by the standards of platform scales. The moral is superior to the intellectual, and the intellectual to the material; and a thought, or an affection, or a noble deed can not be announced in terms of pounds and ounces. This earth of ours is to the universe of God what the plain of Marathon is to the geography of Greece, or the field of Waterloo is to the geography of Europe—the theatre of a decisive struggle. Here sin and redemption have met in

mortal combat,—sin organized and marshalled by Satan, the Prince of the fallen angels, and redemption under the command of the Son of God. Can God be an indifferent spectator of such a conflict? Will He leave man to himself, when He “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”?

But this general interest on the part of God must be special also, and personal. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of a general providence that is not special and personal. The insignificant events play a very important part. God often works with minorities. It was the floating seaweed around his vessel that encouraged Columbus to pursue his voyage after his comrades had given up all hope of seeing land; it was a tear upon his mother's cheek that kept Washington out of the British navy and thus gave to our country a splendid patriot; it was a father's solicitude for his absent boys that sent Joseph out of the tents of Jacob to visit his brethren, and subsequently to condition the history of the world. The accuracy of science is very suggestive of the attitude of God. Science insists that regard must be had for every grain of sand, for every drop of water, for every breath of air. Why then should it be thought a thing incredible that God should look upon man as His own, His creature, His child? The statements of the Bible in this particular are not unreasonable. They meet a response in every penitent, trustful soul.

Prayer is encouraged by them. They rebuke anxiety. Love is aroused. They stimulate hope. God is great, but never too great to be indifferent to us. He made us for Himself. He loves us, even in our sins. Around us He places the many evidences of His bounty. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." More willing is He to bestow the Holy Spirit—His own gracious presence—than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children. If we neglect Him, He is grieved, and He esteems our neglect as robbery; if we serve Him, He rejoices, and He visits our fidelity with the choicest recompense. What, then, shall we say of our disregard of God, of our prayerless years, of our ungrateful conduct? Can we excuse them? Has he who lives without reference to God, whose life is a practical denial of the existence of God, any adequate apology? Think of his attitude! He belongs to God. God has a right to demand obedience of him. Yet he thinks not of this relation, and never once looks up to say, "My Father, I am Thine." Then when profligacy is evident, when this life—God's life—is marred and defiled and brutalized, what a spectacle is presented! We see the filthy tramp upon the streets, and we wonder if he was ever a clean, sweet babe; and we see the profligate in his debauchery, and we wonder that God tolerates

his presence on the earth. Oh, the waste of sin! Oh, the ingratitude of sin! Oh, the injustice that God receives through sin! Let these sad realities not be named among us, my friends, for God has called us unto holiness. In His presence, life discovers its true significance. "If they obey *Him* and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures." God dealeth with us as with sons. He desires our love. He welcomes our fidelity. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In this direction you can not mistake. A recognition of God's ownership will brace every energy and guide every purpose. The finest product of our humanity is the spirituality which is responsive to the direct, personal appeal of God. Enoch walked with God until his refinement became ethereal; and the sturdy Elijah was borne by the momentum of his devoted life to the rapt vision and the triumphal ascent. Paul enriched his immortal nature with the rarest gems of truth, as he submitted himself completely to the evident control of God; and John diffused a heavenly radiance among the churches, as he sat in the evening twilight of the first century, with God's blessing on his holy life. We can suggest nothing better. Life is precious. You may despise it, but God does not. Let us seek to share His estimate respecting ourselves, and also respecting one another and all mankind.

2d. In His teaching, Jesus exhibits a shepherd's interest in a wandering sheep, and God's solicitude over a lost sinner. The shepherd is represented as leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, in order that he may go after the one lost sheep. The sheep is in danger. It will not do for the shepherd to be indifferent. He must gird himself for the toilsome search, and then he must patiently endure the exposure and the weariness. Over the mountains, along the banks of streams, through the forests, into the swamps, his way may lie, while every hour increases the necessity of his finding the defenceless creature. For among the animals which receive man's care, none are so dependent as sheep. When they go astray, they wander aimlessly. Unable to rest, dissatisfied with the richest pasture, in their loneliness, they are torn by briars, wounded by the sharp rocks, and frequently devoured by wild beasts. Their shepherd's interest is their only hope. Because he values them, he does not fail to seek for the lost.

What a picture is this, my friends, of the folly and misery of sin, and the graciousness of God! Sin is folly and also misery. The sinner can give no good reason for departing from God, and he finds that he is unable alone to make his way back to God. "In the common things of our daily experience," remarks Archbishop Trench,\* "a sheep which could wander

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\* "Parables," p. 304.

away from, could also wander back to, the fold. But it is not so with the sheep of God's pasture: this could lose, but it could not find itself again; there is in sin a centrifugal tendency, and of necessity the wanderings of this sheep could only be further and further away. Therefore, if it shall be found at all, it shall only be by its shepherd going to seek it; without this, being once lost, it must be lost forever." Clearly did God recognize the condition of a sinner when He planned redemption. Redemption, it should be remembered, is God's thought. In this matter God takes the first step. The Gospel is not man seeking God, but God seeking man. Other religions begin with man's endeavors to find God, while the Gospel alone announces the original purpose of God to save. This is an interesting feature, and one that is suggestive of divinity. For how else can this remarkable fact be explained? The entire religious system of the world is reversed by the revelation of the Bible. In direct antagonism to every known form of faith, which looks eagerly upward from earth to Heaven, the revelation of the Bible looks downward from Heaven to earth. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But why did God send His Son, and what did the sending involve? I reply that He sent His Son because God appreciated the inherent excellence of hu-



man life; and the sending involved the humiliation and suffering of Bethlehem and Calvary. For a vile or a worthless object, there would have been no such divine consideration. Intelligence never expends the choicest resources on a trivial or useless mission. When a complete relief is organized, there is evidence of appreciation. What then of the divine estimate of man, as it is set forth in the person and work of the Son of God? Can we fail to understand it? Is it possible that we should be indifferent to God's regard when we visit the manger and stand beside the cross? A man may think very little of himself and of human nature, but in the presence of this holy Saviour he dares not utter his complaints, or express his contemptuous feelings. Human nature is precious in the sight of God, otherwise the Eternal Son would never have prepared Himself by the Incarnation, to accomplish our redemption.

This preparation brought Him from His throne of universal dominion to the low estate of infancy. "He took upon Him the form of a servant." The feebleness and dependence of a little child were His; and as He grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, He was always subjected to the limitations of the flesh. "He made Himself of no reputation." His accepted position was one of decent poverty. He was not a beggar; and yet He had not where to lay His head. But His position did not dis-



turb Him. The most exalted position of earthly grandeur would have been nothing to Him, whose proper empire is the vast universe. He was with the poor, because most men are poor, and because spiritual influences usually reach the rich from the poor. The poor of this world have their riches in faith. He wished to reach man as man, and not man in the purple, or man with the sword. As He went from place to place the magnetism of sympathy drew around Him publicans and harlots, the forlorn and the neglected, the outcasts and the degraded. It was openly said in contempt: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." He had the divine faculty of looking into the depths of the human heart. Hypocrisy turned from Him with downcast countenance, while penitence approached with hope and courage. From His lips came the command, which His disciples obey when they undertake to preach the Gospel to every creature. He abolished racial distinctions in the higher unity which love enjoins. The freeman and the slave were alike to Him, inasmuch as He cared principally for the manhood of each.

Then as His teaching became prophetic of His death, He entered speedily into the shadow of the cross. There the gloom increased until the noonday midnight of Calvary was reached, and His expiring groans were heard. For the sake of lost man, in or-

der that He might secure his redemption, our blessed Saviour met death and yielded to its power. It was necessary that the penalty of sin should be borne. To bear it himself the sinner must suffer death. If another may bear it for him, he may be pardoned and saved. In His own body on the tree, Jesus Christ bore our sins. Love prompted His sacrifice. His regard for man made Him willing to give Himself a ransom. Thus He expressed the divine estimate of sin, and at the same time the divine estimate of our humanity; for a sacrifice of priceless value would only have been made on behalf of very precious lives. From this consciousness we may take unspeakable comfort. The cross is the measure of the world. When we weary, as we sometimes do, of the strife and the confusion, of the bitterness and the jealousy, of the shame and the loathsomeness of human nature, we do well to contemplate the cross. The Son of God knew all this, and yet He gave Himself; He appreciated the evil, and yet He placed Himself in the midst of it. Let us be patient. The water-lily raises its pure white petals above the slimy waters of the muddy pond. A saint is a redeemed sinner, nothing else. From the defilement of earth the population of heaven is constantly recruited. When the Son of God gives Himself to redeem a man, let us not think that man to be beneath our notice, or unworthy of our Christian sympathy!

3d. Jesus emphasizes the tenderness of God's love for a man, when He describes the conduct of a shepherd who has found a sheep. We lose much, if our eyes fail to rest upon the words, "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." There are no reproaches, no punishments, no attempts to drag the wandering sheep back to the fold. The search has been successful. The silly, miserable creature has ceased running, and has waited for the shepherd to approach. Now at last he is near. With a gentle, soothing voice he calls the sheep by name; and most lovingly he extends his strong hands to disengage it from the thorns. Gently he takes it in his arms, and knowing well that it is very tired, he carries it on his shoulders. Oh, the wonders of redeeming love! Oh, the sweetness of the Holy Spirit's influence! Have you ever known it? Have you ever struggled with sin, or suffered yourself to be led away by sin, until you were almost in despair? Then have you heard the Saviour's invitation, "Come and I will give you rest"? Have you wondered if you could be accepted, just as you are? Have you supposed that you must make yourself better before God would receive you? Have you feared the reproaches and chidings which you knew that you deserved? Then in looking up penitently have you ever experienced the peace of God which passeth all understanding? Have you carried in your heart a

calm, restful satisfaction, which has surprised you? Oh, friend, it has been the grace of God, whose tender regard you have thus enjoyed. His ways are not our ways. So rash are we, so unforgiving, so cruel, so vindictive, that we can hardly believe in the reality of His grace. Yet the Bible, you know, tells us about the everlasting arms and about the shadow of the wings. We may think now and here on this pleasant spring morning that such things are not for us, that they are too sentimental. But let me remind you that the spring mornings do not last all the year. We shall become conscious of our need of God. The future will have its imperative demands. Will it not be a comfort then to know that God, by the activity of the Holy Spirit, will be to us just what a shepherd is to a sheep, when "he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing"? Poor, weary soul, there is no more opportunity for wandering! Weak and exhausted, there is nothing left but to rest, just as God has asked us to, on His holy promises, without anxiety, without fear, without any endeavor after an experience, without much thought, indeed!

" Sweet in the confidence of faith  
To trust His firm decrees ;  
Sweet to lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His."

4th. The joy and glory of man's recovery by God appear in what Jesus says of the unity of the flock

and the safety of the many folds. We must thank the revisers of the New Testament for correcting one reading at least, which has apparently sanctioned the grave mistakes of Christendom. They have made public the proper translation of the words concerning the many folds and the one flock. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." Unity with diversity; one spirit and many forms, or expressions. Oh! that Christendom might learn this essential lesson of catholicity, and that we might cease to hear about the one, the only *fold*! There is a tradition among the Germans, which Uhland, their lyric poet, has embalmed in verse, to preserve the conception of a lost church. Somewhere in the depths of the forest there is a church, the way to which has been lost. The traveller, even in the night, often hears the sweet sounds of its chimes, and he says, "There are the winds, playing upon the bells of the lost church." Occasionally a favored mortal has found his way to its shrine, and has there witnessed the simplicity of a pure worship and the fellowship of a holy love. But no one has ever been able to retrace such steps, and to lead others to that sacred place. Multitudes sigh over and after the lost church, and the restoration of the time when, as Ambrose finely says: "The cross stood like the mast of a

ship, to which men might cling in the wreck of the world."

"In human speech I could not tell  
All that I saw in that blest shrine.  
The chastened twilight suited well  
With sculptured forms of maids divine,  
The martyred saints of God, and soon  
There shone a flush of glowing light  
That brought a fresher life, like noon,  
And brighter worlds appeared to sight."

Do we not discover a very high appreciation of the possibilities of a redeemed humanity, when we listen to our Saviour's intercessory prayer? That prayer is a prophecy. When He, the divine Lord, prayed for His disciples that "they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us," He understood Himself. He was asking for a consummation which grace is able to realize. We may be one. Love may unite us. Swords may be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks. Humanity, through redemption, is capable of this heavenly fellowship. It is to be known. The earth is to acknowledge it. The angels are to rejoice over it. The Saviour is to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied. Not the unity of compulsion, not the unity of death, but the strong, enduring, intelligent, cordial unity of love. "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."



Meanwhile, and in preparation for that delightful consummation, He leadeth me beside the still waters, and He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. His grace, and that alone, quickens my spirituality to such a degree that the lofty themes of inspiration are my delight, that communion with God is possible, that holiness becomes a clear and definite ambition. Facing now toward God, with sin forgiven, with the spirit renewed and in part sanctified, with every right impulse to direct and stimulate, with endless ages as the vista of the Christian life, what must be before us, of what are we capable, unto what shall we attain? In glowing terms, a gifted writer\* of our day and land has recorded his convictions and hopes in a passage of rare beauty: "It seems to me to glorify life, it seems to me to banish the shadow of gloom from death, to feel that that majestic figure—of Brother, Teacher, Friend, Redeemer—which towers supremely over the centuries, which made the earth sublime by its advent, which seemed in ascending to unite it to the heavens, has equal place in worlds to come! that we may trust His imperative word; that we may serve His kingly cause; that we may see the illumined universe for us as for Him a house of Victory and Peace! that we may stand, bye and bye, with Him amid the light as yet unreached, and say, each

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\* Storrs, "Divine Origin of Christianity," p. 357.



one: 'I believed in Thy religion; I saw its triumphs in the earth; I felt its power in my heart; I rose to God in love upon it; I foreknew by it, what I now find, Eternal Life.' "

Oh! brethren, when I think of these possibilities, when I realize somewhat the surpassing opportunities of grace, when I know that you and I and all men are called of God to accept this splendid inheritance, I wonder at my dulness, my apathy, my disregard of others and their welfare, and I long to give myself and them entirely to God, that we may respond to the solicitations of His love. Not to humiliate us: No! but to honor us; not to abase us: No! but to glorify us; not to strip us to our shame: No! but to crown us with immortal beauty. This is God's purpose. He knows that we can respond. He is not addressing the rocks, nor the cedars, nor the pines, nor the king of beasts, nor the gentle lambs; but He is speaking to men, whom He has created in His own image and after His own likeness, and whom He has redeemed with the precious blood of the beloved Son; to men, whom He is prepared to rescue, and then to welcome to an experience of perfect joy. Alas, alas, that men reject God's mercy, and seek the way of death, when life, eternal life, is open to them! Let it not be so with us. But cheerfully recognizing this divine estimate of man, let us aim to secure "the stature of the fulness of Christ."

#### IV.

### THE MORAL ENDS OF BUSINESS.

*"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."*—PROV. xxii. 29.

THE Proverb addresses every one who is engaged in business. Business is employment. The employment may be more or less important without passing beyond the reach of the Proverb. Anything that demands attention comes within the scope of Solomon's maxim. He has coined the experience of a careful observer. Life in Jerusalem has exhibited the many occupations which engage the residents of a city; and the adjacent country has presented every variety of rural interest. The successes and failures of merchants and statesmen, of farmers and shepherds, of mechanics and soldiers, have announced themselves to him. His estimate has a broad application. As a king, he has frequently commended the diligence which has elevated a subject to a position of prominence and influence.

The thought of Solomon, however, does not turn principally to the material ends of business. Business

has reference to such ends; and with many persons, those are the only ends of business. Business, as they regard it, is for the sake of money. When money is realized, business prosperity is evident; and when money is not realized, business is a disappointment. But it should be remembered that a large share of the business of life can have nothing whatever to do with money. There are countless services which are performed without any idea of money. Duty or love must explain them. Yet they are business, and business of a most exalted character. With these services the sagacious king is well acquainted. He knows that they possess a moral value, and that diligence in them leaves a permanent impression. It is to this impression, as it shapes and adorns the soul, that he directs his Proverb. The "man diligent in his business" secures his manhood. His employment becomes his discipline. Out from his business he brings a generous spirituality. He is unlike the fool of the New Testament Parable, whose entire wealth was stored in barns and granaries, because he resembles Simon Peter, who could say to the cripple at the gate of the Temple: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee," or Paul the Apostle, who could write, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." He is "rich toward God," even if he must be counted among the "poor of this world." The moral ends of business are the returns, which no

bankruptcy can threaten, no thief can steal, no fire can destroy. They are safe. As solid bullion, they are transported to the New Jerusalem, where they will enhance the joys of eternal life. In the presence of the King of kings, the diligent man may hope to stand, as the greeting is heard: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

We should have no difficulty, my friends, in rising to the grand estimate of the Hebrew king. We are engaged in business. With many different employments our time is filled. There must be an end or purpose which holds us. We should not engage in business simply for the sake of engaging in business. Business is a means to an end, rather than an end. What then is its end? Is it material or moral? Are we absorbed in pursuits whose returns can all be exhibited on a balance-sheet, or have we learned to prize the returns which are moral? I fear that to some of us the suggestion may seem novel, if not absurd, that the moral ends of business are of principal importance. The suggestion crosses the lines of our familiar thoughts. We are not accustomed to it. Yet after all, is it not a wise and true suggestion? Has not God given us the business of life in order that we may secure therefrom a training which will develop holy characters? If this is His design, should

we not undertake our business in obedience to the command: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"? For "a man diligent in his business" should become possessed of a large amount of spiritual wealth.

As we consider this very practical subject, we should remember that, 1st, A diligent man is permitted to believe that an honorable business is a divine calling. We have adopted an unfortunate usage which leads us to designate one particular business, that of the minister of religion, as a sacred profession or calling. This usage is certainly good, if it does not lead to a discrimination against other employments. But that is just what it does, and consequently it is evil. There are hundreds of worthy men and women who are pursuing the quiet life of the farm, the shop, the counting-room, or the household without any conception that theirs is a divine calling. They believe that the minister of religion has been called to a sacred work, but they can not discover the sacredness of their work. Yet their work is sacred, and their calling is a divine calling, just as truly as his is. Many pages of the world's history must be turned before the special institution of an order of religious teachers is met. When God created man, however, He placed him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, and thus He called him to be a farmer; and when He ordained that fee-

ble infancy should make an appeal to parental strength and love, He sanctified the duties of the household; when He chose out of all the numerous inhabitants of the earth the father of the faithful, He sent him from Ur of the Chaldees upon journeys which compelled him to traffic with the Egyptians and Canaanites, and thus Abraham became a merchant; and when He gave His Son to the humble life of Nazareth, Jesus became for many years the village carpenter. Perhaps we may have overlooked the significance of the divine appointments. Business is God's ordination. The apostles of the early church were men of business. Paul did not hesitate to hold up his callous hands before the elders of Ephesus, and to remind them that "these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me." He it was who sent to Corinth the sharp command: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." The converted slaves were restless. They imagined that new opportunities of usefulness would be found in new spheres of work. Paul checked them, and urged diligence in the particular calling which was then theirs. Thus it came to pass that the diligence of Christian slaves commended the Gospel to heathen masters, until the splendid palaces of the Roman Empire became the homes of our Lord's disciples.

It is not by accident that "man goeth forth unto



his work, and to his labor, until the evening." "Very plainly," remarks an English writer,\* "God has put us into such a universe that He only can shape us by—destiny only spins its purpose out of us by—*work*. Perhaps we should translate the word in wider or narrower senses; indeed, all that reduces us to experience, all that stirs within us the sense of knowledge, partakes of the nature of work. Every toil may be the platform for a higher toil; and all toils point to the consummation and perfection of the worker, the invisible, but living, personal soul." We should not, therefore, fret and worry because we are in a humble place. God has appointed the place, in which He looks for our diligence.

"God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state  
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand, and wait."

Who does not need the bracing influence of this conviction? The minister of religion feels it in his business, and so should every one of us. The business of life is a divine calling. God recognizes it. By His providence He leads the individual into it. There He expects that there will be a recognition of the moral ends, which are ready to exert a controlling in-

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\* Paxton Hood, "Dark Sayings on a Harp," p. 72.



fluence. Thus endeavor secures point and definiteness, and activity finds guidance and comfort, and aspiration looks up to God with cheerful hope. The estimate of life is completely altered. We hush our complaints. We gird our energies. We determine to do our best at all times, because we are laborers together with God. "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service as to the Lord and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

2d. "A man diligent in his business" is in a position to appreciate the traits of character which God approves. This appreciation will come to him as he observes his own life and the lives of others. The contact of life with life in business; the demands which are made upon the moral qualities of the soul; the approvals and the condemnations which are evident—these are all instructive. The proper study of man is man; and man can be studied most critically when he is in the activity of business. Then he discovers himself, and by a prolonged course of life he manifests the characteristics which God commends or rebukes. These characteristics appear now in the concrete rather than in the abstract, as illustrations rather than as statements. The abstract truths, the plain statements are to be found in the Word of God,

while their correspondences, the examples, are present in the life of business. Gradually the diligent man becomes possessed of the conviction that God is right in announcing the traits of character which He has presented for our acceptance. The lessons of business are confirmatory of the divine counsels and commands.

There is a very plain statement in the Bible of the power of love. In his masterly discussion of the principles of government, the Apostle reaches the conclusion that "love is the fulfilling of the law." He makes bold to say this when Nero is Emperor and his deputies are governors. He proposes to antagonize their wickedness with the power of love. They have all the machinery of government under their control. They are in command of a magnificent army. They worship, if such men can be said to worship, power. Yet Paul is prepared to meet them with love. He is ready to match love against power. Is he wise? Has he been carried away by his enthusiasm? The diligent man can answer. His experience has acquainted him with the influential elements of character. He has learned to give an appropriate estimate to the man who threatens and storms and blasphemes, as well as to the man who considers right and justice, and who seeks the welfare of his fellow-men. He knows that the thunder makes the noise, while the lightning hurls the shaft. He has not for-

gotten John the Baptist and Herod, nor our Lord and Pilate. Love has opened to his scrutiny in order that he may become acquainted with its precious contents. These contents include every moral duty. All personal, social, and religious interests are here. For surely that is a comprehensive statement which says that "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Selfishness ultimately digs its own grave. Duplicity ultimately smites the deceitful man with the recoil of the boomerang. Adoni-bezek was taught by his contact with business that retribution is the shadow of cruelty; while Mephibosheth was protected by David because he was Jonathan's son. Without love there can be no desirable progress, no uplifting of the weak, no defence of the poor, no consideration of age or sex. Where might makes right, there barbarism hovers about the door. The kingdom of Dahomey has long enjoyed the unenviable notoriety of being destitute of love; and in that kingdom property and life are both at the mercy of a despotic tyrant. Love would rebuke his despotism, would arrest his bloody hand, would give him a new heart, would transform his kingdom. Love is wisdom as well as mercy; love is strength as well as grace; love is duty and also privilege. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our-

selves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." "What do you think fools were made for?" Ruskin once asked. Then without waiting for an answer, he said: "They were made that wise people may take care of them. That is the true and plain fact concerning the relations of every strong and wise man to the world about him. He has his strength given to him, not that he may crush the weak, but that he may support and guide them. In his own household he is to be the guide and the support of his children; out of his household, he is still to be the father, that is, the guide and support of the weak and the poor; not merely of the meritoriously weak and of the innocently poor, but of the guiltily and punishably poor; of the men who ought to have known better, of the poor who ought to be ashamed of themselves." There were certain well-dressed and comfortably circumstanced Jews who looked into the face of the half-crazed Judas as he threw the price of his iniquity upon the pavement at their feet, saying, with a sneer, "What is that to us? See thou to that": and then there was a converted Pharisee who wrote in the catholic spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ: "As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men"; there was the cultured Gallio, who dismissed the appeal of justice because he did not care to trouble himself with vexatious questions: and then there was an apostle who wrote that "pure re-

ligion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." The law of love is the law of considerateness, the law of political economy, the law of prudence, the law of common sense.

We may reverse the picture, and thus discover renewed evidence of the moral value of business. It is not difficult to imagine a household, a community, a State, in which the traits of character which God approves are all disregarded : we can readily believe that some men look at trade as the business of cunning and greed rather than of honesty and liberality ; we can recognize the temporary success which waits upon the most corrupt endeavors. These are the dazzling pictures of worldly life, whose high colors attract undue attention. The Psalmist met them in his day, and he was perplexed as he undertook to explain them until he went into the sanctuary of God ; then understood he their end. We are often saddened by the prosperity of the wicked. It tries a good man's faith to see that wealth pours into the coffers of one who is violating every law of God, while his own arduous labors barely yield him his daily bread. Yet the good man after all is not unblest. The moral ends of business are his. But for fidelity and industry like his, society would disintegrate and trade would be an impossibility. For

how can society maintain its order if every man's hand is against his brother, and how can trade flourish if there is no confidence in character? Men of the world have their portion in this life—a fair portion, an attractive portion—and yet their portion leaves them destitute at last, when they enter upon the life whose years are endless. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

With that memorable word of the Lord, through Micah, upon our lips, “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God,” we might safely address our fellow-men in every department of business. The universal response would be a commendation of the inspired statement. Be just, be merciful, and be humble before God. What more can be desired? Do not those traits of character promise the most complete prosperity? Justice before mercy, and yet justice tempered by mercy; perfect integrity in speech and conduct, and an integrity which is thoughtful and compassionate. Justice and mercy exercised always with respect for the perfect attributes of the infinite God. An absence of pride. The contrition which God loves. Suffer those traits to become prevalent, and what may you not expect? What household life will then be known! What a pure Christian socialism will be witnessed! What a splendid conception of the possibilities of trade will



obtain among men! For these are the traits of character which can meet the earnest, anxious appeal of the world's restlessness, and which can establish the world's business upon the solid foundations of truth, equity, and love.

3d. A diligent man may find that the opportunities of business are favorable to the development of the Christian virtues and graces. One of Krummacher's Parables describes a visit of a Cherub, after Adam had tilled the ground and made himself a garden full of plants and trees. The Cherub came without his flaming sword, and his countenance was benignant and kind. "Behold," he said, "no more do fruits grow of themselves for you; you must labor to eat bread in the sweat of your brow. But after the labor, you rejoice in the fruit acquired by your toil, and the full corn-ears are pleasant to your eyes. The merciful Jehovah has given you the means of creating for yourselves an Eden."

"His goodness is great even when He chasteneth," replied Adam. "We will labor willingly in the sweat of our brows. But formerly Jehovah was nearer to us, and blessed us, and lifted up the light of His countenance on us. What have we to atone for this?"

"Prayer," answered the Cherub. "Toil is the earthly; prayer is the heavenly gift of Jehovah."

"Then Adam lifted up his face, and gave thanks,



and prayed, and confessed that the Lord is gracious.' The Parable covers the whole truth. Toil and prayer; business and devotion; these are two blessed privileges, which God in mercy has conferred upon our race. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

The favorable opportunities of which we speak, are those which call for self-restraint, those which call for consideration, and those which call for a generous beneficence. In the activity of business contact, diligence discovers many admirable means of grace. These we must improve, with a cordial recognition of their divine purpose.

a. First of all, there are many opportunities of self-restraint. The fretting, little cares must be met calmly and patiently; the ordinary temptations must be resisted; the disappointments must not be allowed to produce despair; the afflictions must witness resignation. Self-discipline is a necessity, which is only possible in connection with life's business. In the retirement of his own chamber a man may imagine that he has completely subdued himself, while a brief experience in the world will probably convince him that he has still many very active remainders of corruption. The mistake of monasticism has deluded many an earnest soul into the belief that a religious life may be advantageously cultivated within the retirement of a cell. But such was not our Saviour's conception

when He prayed earnestly that His disciples might be kept from the evils of the world without being taken out of the world. We need just this discipline, my brethren, and we should be quick to appreciate it. What is a gilded toy of some land-locked harbor, with its smooth lines and well-trimmed yards, as compared with the weather-beaten merchantman which has sailed on every sea! Moral heroism is realized in conflict. It is easy, very easy, to love the lovely and to do good to the amiable; but it is hard, very hard, to love your enemies, to do good to those who hate you. The cheek may readily be turned for the second kiss of a friend, but the man who will offer his cheek for a second blow is a man of magnificent self-control. What spectacle is there that is more truly divine than power under restraint. Yet, alas, we too seldom witness that spectacle. Our impatience, our fretfulness, our complaints—these are the blemishes on the robe of many a saint. I have somewhere read that Mr. Pitt once gave to a manager of the Bank of England the advice not to lose his temper, if possible, at any time, and never during the hours of business. The illustrious statesman himself was an excellent example of his own advice. His patience seemed inexhaustible. The advice is timely. We may all accept it with profit to ourselves and others. Whatever our station or our work may be, we may find opportunity for the exercise of patience or self-restraint.

b. There are opportunities, not a few, which call for consideration. It is written: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." "The poor always ye have with you." There are many kinds of poverty. The problem of distress is complex. What can we do? How shall relief be brought? The ordinary business of each day is an introduction to the problem. Who are so well acquainted with the requirements of child-life as the women who nurture and train these little ones? Who know the condition of the degraded classes as well as the men and women who go among them with counsel and encouragement? Who can appreciate sorrow if he has never had a grief? We must not be distant. The intimacy of life is too real. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." We must consider one another in order that we may benefit the entire race. The day of Chinese walls and sealed ports and feudal castles has passed. A more open day has dawned. Practical Christianity is abroad in search of the needy. Like the brave monks of St. Bernard, who keep watch upon their snowy mountain for any traveller who may be dying from cold and hunger, Christian philanthropy is seeking to "rescue the perishing and care for the dying." Its consideration is already manifesting most blessed results, and is also offering most encouraging promises. The problems are not despised. With devout consecration the best intelli-

gence and effort are given to these interests of morality and social order. We are rapidly making history, and history, too, of a most encouraging character. The future may be safely left to Christianity, if only the Holy Spirit will quicken Christians in order that we may meet the call of Christ.

And can any one imagine that such consideration will leave no impress on character? How is it with the Christians, who are most ready to bear one another's burdens? How is it with those who imitate the Master in going about and doing good? Surely, they have their reward. The culture of the virtues and graces proceeds under the most favorable auspices. The devoted servants of Christ are Christ-like in speech and conduct. To one such from our own community—a modest woman\*—the welcome of our Lord has just been spoken. With a heart full of tenderness, she gave her life to the poor, neglected girls of the city, whose interests she espoused, and for whose sake she exhausted her vitality. A noble service, beautifully rendered, and as beautifully recompensed by Him whose anointing filled the house at Bethany with the odor of the spikenard! For as the gentle-hearted woman considered others, her Lord considered her, and made His grace to triumph in a spirituality which was the beginning of eternal life.

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\* Mrs. J. F. Joy.

c. There are the opportunities of a generous beneficence. What is the Gospel but love, and what is love without beneficence? Beneficence—the sacred art of giving—needs exercise; and how shall we exercise ourselves in this grace, if we have nothing to do with any form of business? One of your number told me the other day that he once discovered a spring on the Palisades, which was only noticeable because the ground was wet around it. When, however, the spring had been cleaned and piped, the waters flowed for use and beauty in an inexhaustible supply. It is so with love. There are hearts whose love is hardly more than the moisture of selfishness. There is no outlet; no opportunity. But when suffering is present, when the opportunity is at hand, when relief is organized, then the love pours out a strong, full stream of beneficence. Thus affliction has been sanctified, and the memorials of sorrow are often blessings to the poor in many ways. When Henry I. sailed from Normandy to England, the white ship which carried Prince William and his bride was lost. The king, it is said, never smiled again. But Theobald, who was with Henry, and whose grief over the loss of Matilda, the princess, his sister, was inconsolable, rose to a grander estimate of the meaning of affliction, and gave to Bernard of Clairvaux the money with which to erect a house of prayer in the beautiful valley of France. Life must carry upon its

surface this impressive lesson. We are not to live for ourselves. We are only stewards. As God is always giving, so must we give constantly, and in giving, find the increase of our devotion, the efficiency of our strength.

In one of his emblems, Gotthold says that as he was passing a mill he remembered the remark of a friend, that "man's heart is like a mill-stone: pour in corn, and round it goes, bruising and grinding and converting it into flour; whereas give it no corn, and the stone, indeed, turns round, but only grinds itself away, and becomes ever thinner, and smaller, and narrower." Work is God's benediction. Business is His bountiful provision for the safety of man. There are moral ends to be secured. Happy is he who secures those ends in the strengthening and adornment of character, so that he becomes prepared to stand before "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God!"



## V.

### CONCEPTIONS OF GOD AS EXPRESSED BY THE SANCTUARY.\*

*"That thine eyes may be open toward this house  
night and day."*—1 KINGS viii. 29.

THERE is a thought of present interest in the petition of the Hebrew king. He has completed the magnificent Temple, which is designed to take the place of the simple Tabernacle in the worship of God. The sacred ark has been deposited in the inner sanctuary, and the divine response of the descending, overshadowing cloud has been received. A song of praise has met this welcome expression of approval, and Solomon has turned to pronounce a benediction upon the great congregation. Then with his face toward the cloud which covers the Temple, he has prostrated himself upon his knees to engage in prayer.

His prayer is a remarkable exhibition of the prevalent ideas respecting God. For he addresses the Most High with the intelligent reverence which the Hebrews alone are able to express. The divine unity

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\* Preached after the enlargement of the church edifice.



and spirituality are recognized, as well as the justice and the grace, which are so precious to the chosen people. Reference is made to the efficacy of the sacrifices, whose significance is an essential element of true religion. The order of the Temple, in its structure, in its appointments, in its many services, is presented as an appeal, which may be expected to secure the blessing of God. Inasmuch as he believes that the commands of God have been met, the king rejoices in God's approval. This obedience is magnetic. By it the cloud has been attracted to the Temple, upon which it rests as the symbol of the divine presence.

Consequently the petition, which asks that "thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day," is an expression of Solomon's conviction that the Temple with its worship is adapted to the character of God. A structure like this, with its brazen altar, its laver, its table of shew-bread, its candlestick, its altar for incense, its veil and sacred ark; with its priests and sacrifices; with its elaborate ritual and many observances, which are concerned with the reconciliation of those who have sinned, can have reference only to the worship of Jehovah, who is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." No such temple would have been erected by a heathen nation. Idolatry does not

express itself in this way when it provides for the worship of false gods. Only to the Lord God, who has revealed His infinite love in the offering of His Son, can such a typical system make an appeal. The Temple is simply the response of the Hebrews to the revelation of the divine character which was made to Moses at Mount Sinai. Thus the convictions of Solomon and the religious opinions of his age are recorded as their conceptions of God are made known.

This then is the thought which may profitably engage our attention. Our sanctuary has been remodelled. Through the blessing of God we are once more permitted to worship in this place which has become very sacred to us. Since we last met here, extensive alterations and improvements have been made. Our house of worship is now commodious and convenient. Every attention has been paid to our comfort. We are grateful that we are able to meet under such auspicious circumstances. This work, however, as it has been planned intelligently, must have reference to our ideas of God. This is not a heathen temple, nor is it a lyceum. These walls have been erected by the devotion of Christians who desire thus to secure a place of worship. Our conceptions of God have conditioned our efforts: and we are prepared now to invoke the blessed presence of Him whose we are and whom we serve in the petition of the He-

brew king, "that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day!"

1st. The sanctuary has an intimate relation to the worship of the church. Our Puritan ancestors called their sanctuaries "meeting-houses," as a protest against the baptized idolatry of the middle ages, which had attempted to sanctify splendid abbeys and costly shrines. In this endeavor, the middle ages neglected sadly the spiritual interests of the people. Architecture and ecclesiasticism joined hands in the work of building and decorating cathedrals and of establishing hierarchies. The Bible was neglected. The Gospel was seldom preached in its simplicity. Education was confined to the universities. Pilgrimages became a necessity, inasmuch as acceptable prayer was supposed to be associated with the services of particular altars. Images of the saints and pictures of the Virgin Mary were accepted by the ignorant as objects of worship. Superstition prevailed, and with it intolerance, and with that evil cruelty, and with cruelty persecution. Against this spirit and these practices, Puritanism, with an open Bible, raised its hand and its voice—its hand, which held the hammer of the iconoclast, and its voice, which thundered out the rebukes and denunciations of the Almighty. Religion took possession of the popular heart in connection with the labors of Luther in Germany, of Calvin in Switzerland, of Tyndale in

England, and of Erasmus in all parts of Europe. Men began to realize that they were deprived of their rights. Their intelligence, quickened and informed by the Word of God, which they could read in their own languages, asserted itself firmly and indignantly. An organization was effected. A blow for liberty was struck, and a new idea of worship instantly gained prominence. In his reply to Sir Thomas More's jest about the building of Tenterden steeple, Tyndale said: "Since these false monsters crope up into our consciences and robbed us of the knowledge of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, making us believe in such pope, holy works, and to think that there was none other way into Heaven, we have not wearied to build them abbeys, cloisters, colleges, chantries, and cathedral churches with high steeples, striving and envying one another who should do most." He saw and others with him that the Church of the living God is the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the visible church "consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." Such a church is not to be confounded, even in the language of familiar speech, with a stately edifice, which has been erected out of the stones of the mountains, out of the timber of the forests, out of the gold and silver, graven by art and man's device. This is a living Temple, which the Holy Spirit fills with the sacred

influences of penitence and faith, of peace and love. No man can build a church. God alone is able to quarry and to fashion the lively stones, and to build up a spiritual house.

There is a story in Church history, which has lived because it illustrates the power of these truths of God's Word. It is said that when Charles V. was holding the Diet of Augsburg, in 1530, a party of actors asked leave to present before him a pantomime. When permission had been granted, there entered the hall a masked figure in a doctor's gown, upon whose back was a label, "Johann Reuchlin." He threw down upon the floor a bundle of sticks, some straight and some crooked, and so departed. Next followed another, in similar dress, whose name was Erasmus of Rotterdam. He tried to make the crooked sticks square with the straight ones; and then, finding his labor in vain, retired with evident confusion. The third masked figure was Martin Luther, who set a light to the crooked sticks, and when the wood was blazing, went out. Then came in the emperor, and with drawn sword tried vainly to keep the fire and the sticks apart. Last of all, Pope Leo X. appeared, wringing his hands and looking about for help. Two jars—one full of oil, the other of water—were within reach. He passionately seized the oil and poured it upon the flames, which, spreading madly, drove him away. Puritanism was the fire which no violence of

civil authority, which no cunning of ecclesiasticism could arrest. It was fed by the divine Word. The truth, as God had made it known, was precious, and nothing was allowed to interfere with the progress of that truth. Hence Puritanism took pride in calling its sanctuaries "meeting-houses"; and the Pilgrims, one branch only of the Puritans, met for worship, after they had landed on the shores of New England, in buildings which were severely plain. There are persons with us now who can recall the unsightly appearance of the old white "meeting-house" upon the village green of their native town. Architecture was despised. Even the comfort of worshippers was not considered. The high pulpit and the straight-back pews and the long prayers and the theological sermons were intimately related. The Pilgrims expressed their conceptions of worship. We may think, perhaps, that they erred in their severity. We may believe, and with good right, that they would have been nearer to the truth of God if they had not reacted so sharply against the artistic sentiments of the middle ages. For God has implanted in man's nature the sentiment of the beautiful, and that sentiment must somehow be allowed expression in the worship of Him who is the perfection of beauty. But we must judge them charitably. They were fallible men. Under similar circumstances we should probably not do as well as they did. Pioneer work is rough work.



The sappers and miners are always scratched and bruised by the contact of their advance. Truth is more to us than beauty. As some one has said: "We ornament construction, but we do not construct ornament." The protest of those stirring centuries is echoing still. The Church in its spirituality has gained a glorious recognition. Christendom no longer tolerates the piracy of the grand old name Catholic by Rome or Constantinople, by Canterbury or Westminster. When the confession "I believe in the holy Catholic Church" is heard, the charity of Christian intelligence looks toward each horizon, and also heavenward, with the sweet consciousness that all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" are meant.

"One family, we dwell in Him,  
One Church above, beneath,  
Though now divided by the stream,  
The narrow stream of death."

Such a church, while its members are here upon the earth, must meet for worship; and the sanctuaries, erected with pious devotion, must express the ideas of worship which obtain. If those ideas are simple, the sanctuaries will be simple; while, if the ideas are associated with many suggestions of human thought, the sanctuaries will resemble the cathedrals of the middle ages, in which altars are seen, and sacrifices are performed, and priests minister, and God's Word has little prominence.



2d. The worship of the Church expresses the faith which is held concerning God. The purest and most acceptable worship will always proceed from a well-informed faith. Our blessed Lord said to the woman of Samaria: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; while Paul, when he found at Athens an altar to "The Unknown God," remarked to the Athenians: "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." Just as we know God shall we worship Him. In the worship of the Church, therefore, the faith of the Church is expressed. Devotion uses the language of worship, and devotion is nothing better than a foolish sentiment if it finds its origin in conceptions of God which are born of the human imagination. The divine Word alone can acquaint us with the character and purposes of God; and in that Word alone are we able to meet the truths which build us up on our most holy faith. Faith thus established glows as devotion, burning the purest incense of prayer and praise, of gratitude and love in the presence of the invisible God. But faith rests upon truth, and thus truth underlies worship. There can be no pure worship, holy and welcome in the estimate of Him with whom we have to do, if truth is not appreciated. The Italian bandit, with his bloody dagger and his bloody plans, will hardly dare to pass a wayside shrine without pausing to repeat his "Ave"

or "Pater Noster." Yet who will say that he, in his ignorance and guilt, is an ideal worshipper? He draws near with his mouth, perchance, but his heart is far away. On the other hand, the Scotch covenanter, with his old Bible and in his quiet Highland home, is able to offer the most devout offering to God when he kneels and simply pours out his soul in prayer. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." We must "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." From the Hebrews He demanded a lamb "without blemish and without spot," and from us He requires an equally pure sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

When, therefore, we become acquainted with the worship of the Church, we become acquainted, also, with the prevalent ideas concerning God. Who is God whom we worship? What is the Divine character? Are His purposes known? How shall we approach Him? Let us inquire of the splendid service which the Romish Church has brought to

such perfection. What answer will be given? Here are paintings and images which represent the mother of our Lord and many canonized saints. Before them, prayer is offered. Here are altars and priests, and the sacrifice of the Mass is constantly celebrated. Here are confessionals, and the forgiveness of sins is authoritatively announced. As we look upon such an order of worship, what impression do we gain? I am not of those who turn away with ridicule and disgust from the worship which has accumulated a great deal of error around a precious nucleus of truth. I should be ashamed of my Protestantism if it consisted largely in denunciations of another name. There is too much devotion within that ancient communion, too much heroism in the ministry of self-denial, too much holy living to allow of such reflections. Yet I can see the error and rebuke it, even when I recognize the truth and commend it. Heartily do I join with Robertson\* in saying: "I pray you, Christian brethren, do not join those fierce associations which think only of uprooting error. There is a spirit in them which is more of earth than heaven; short-sighted, too, and self-destructive. They do not make converts to Christ, but only controversialists and adherents to a party. They compass sea and land. It matters little whether fierce Romanism

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\* "Sermons," Vol. II., 269.

or fierce Protestantism wins the day; but it does matter whether or not in the conflict we lose some precious truth as well as the very spirit of Christianity." What, then, is the mistaken conception of God which this worship appears to perpetuate? I reply, that it makes too little of the sincerity and sufficiency of God's purpose to save the world by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As we read the Bible, we are taught that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; that the Son of God was "made in the likeness of men"; that "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"; that He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; that "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified"; that "by grace are ye saved, through faith"; that He is "a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God"; that we may "come boldly unto the Throne of Grace"; that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; that "there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Thus we become acquainted with God in the revelation of the Son. We are satisfied to trust Him. To Him we make our confessions of sins, for He is always ready to hear and to pardon, and consequently the confessional is not required; to His

complete sacrifice on Calvary we look by faith, and are assured that no repetition of that supreme act can ever be required, and consequently we do not wish to celebrate the Mass, nor do we believe in a human priesthood as an essential order of the Christian ministry. Jesus Christ is our Prophet, Priest, and King; to Him we direct our loving and adoring interest, and are confident that no intercessor, like the Virgin Mary or a saint, is needed to plead on our behalf, and consequently we are not careful to kneel before pictures or images when we worship.

It is evident that there are two ideas of God in these two orders of worship. God, as we know Him in our Bible study, is very near to us, is deeply interested in our welfare, is seeking our salvation, has made every provision for our religious wants. The glory of God appears in the face of Jesus Christ, whom we have been taught to admire and to reverence and to love and to worship. As little children, we fold our hands and lisp our simple prayer—the “our Father which art in Heaven,” and as strong men, we bow our heads reverently with an awe-inspiring consciousness of the Infinite Majesty of God, and still we use the language, “Our Father which art in Heaven.” We have no altars, because Christ, our Saviour, is the living altar; we have no bloody sacrifices, because the sacrifice of Christ is our sufficient plea. We call no man priest, because the

priesthood was abolished when the Temple veil was rent in twain to discover to all worshippers the mercy-seat. God invites us; we respond; with penitence and faith we approach Him, believing that He will bless us "for Jesus' sake."

Let us turn now and observe the worship of the sanctuary which is often called a "meeting-house." Here is a less stately edifice, although taste and beauty may find expression here, and comfort and convenience may both be known. Puritanism has wisely invoked the aid of architecture to relieve it from the accusation of barrenness and austerity under which it once rested. Truth may be as faithfully expressed in worship, when the eye is not offended, and the body is not chilled, as ever it has been in dens or caves of the earth, when every possible discomfort was experienced. Within this sanctuary, now entered for inspection, the arrangements for worship are simple. There are no pictures nor images before which devotion kneels. A congregation assembles to unite in prayer and praise to God, to celebrate the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to pronounce and to hear the inspired Word. A chosen leader of these services is a minister or servant, not in any special sense a priest. He stands behind the Holy Bible, which is his authority and defence. Between him and his brethren, as an arbiter, as a bond of union, as a token of respect, ap-



pears this sacred volume. Out of it he is to be judged; and out of it they are to be judged also. He is only a weak man. If he is faithful in his presentations of these divine truths, in prayer, in song, in the many utterances of his ministry, his message is to be received as the truth of God; if he is unfaithful, if his own conceits find place and expression, the message from his lips is to be treated as the word of man. The one endeavor of this worship seems to be to honor God in Christ, to emphasize the redemption which has been accomplished for the race, to quicken the individual conscience, to develop personal religion, to secure the daily and hourly worship of holy activity. God is presented with His deep concern for all that is human. His presence in life is constantly taught. The familiarity of His address is announced. His hopes and His benedictions are urged for man's acceptance.

Errors, we may rest assured, will creep in and attach themselves here as elsewhere. No one of us is safe. This order of worship has its dangers, which we should not fail to consider. When we are trained to think familiarly of God, we may find that we are thinking carelessly and irreverently of Him. Even the blessed assurance that we are justified by faith has led, as in the days of Luther, to frightful excesses through the perversions of corrupt men. Religion is morality as well as devotion. "Who," asks the



Psalmist, "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?" Then he answers his own question by saying, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart," not the clean hands alone, for that would be morality without devotion; not the pure heart alone, for that would be mysticism without morality. But the clean hands and the pure heart, morality and devotion. Our simplicity of worship may incline us to be intolerant of others who prefer, as they have a right to, much more form. The prayers which the eye catches from the printed page may be adopted as the heart's sincere expression, as truly as the prayers which the ear reports to the mind. There is room for large liberty here. God has given; let no man question it. Then there may be a veritable idolatry of the Word, a bowing down to worship the sacred volume, a carrying the Book about as the African carries a fetich, a treatment of its ennobling truths which is fatal to any hope of discovering their spirit and life. "Search the Scriptures," our Lord said. The Book is to be valued for its contents. Only they properly use it who bring forth from its treasures the precious messages of divine love, and the still more precious exhibition of Divine Excellence, which is contained in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Worship should be studious. Its knowledge of God should be increasingly intimate. With this

knowledge there should be an adaptation of order or method. We do not think of God precisely as our fathers did. Our thought has more of Christ in it. We dwell more upon the love than upon the stern attributes of the divine nature. Our Christianity is more catholic and more practical. Canon Freemantle \* has remarked that "the old Jerusalem was all temple. The mediæval church was all temple. But the ideal of the New Jerusalem was no temple, but a God-inhabited society. . . . The title of its Founder is Immanuel, God with us, God in us, God making Himself a home in all the relations in which love and justice draw man to man, and class to class, and nation to nation ; a God who is known and realized in the tenderness of fatherly and motherly and filial affection, the rapture of married love, the steadiness of friendship, the honesty of trade relations, the loyalty of citizenship, the righteousness of political rule, the peace which is destined to bind together all mankind. . . . All worship which does not aim at these is hypocrisy ; that worship alone is Christian worship which aims at their establishment." As then truth concerning God breaks in upon and informs the mind, worship will adopt new expressions. We do not worship just as our fathers did, and our children will not worship just as we do. Yet those before us wor-

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\* "The Gospel of the Secular Life," p. 67.

shipped acceptably, and received the witness of the Holy Spirit ; and we believe that God will be pleased to accept our worship whenever it is sincerely offered ; and we are confident that "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, His name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense shall be offered unto His name and a pure offering." No stereotyped order of worship has come down to us with divine sanction, and yet we know that God has given the alphabet with which each devout heart may form the sentences of prayer and praise.

3d. The faith which is held concerning God determines the divine attitude toward the sanctuary. It was after Moses had faithfully met the pattern which had been given to him in the Mount, that the cloud rested upon the Tabernacle ; it was after Solomon had provided the furniture, as God had directed, that the Temple was covered with the cloud. If either of these eminent leaders of worship had disobeyed, if Moses had left out the brazen altar, or if Solomon had concluded that the laver was superfluous ; if Moses had decided that he would not veil the Most Holy Place, or if Solomon had ventured to bring in a new order of priesthood, God would not have met their worship with His approval. They both accepted, however, the revelation of Mount Sinai as from God, and then they knew that an answer was theirs.

Unless we, my friends, can reproduce their wisdom in our experience, we can not anticipate the blessed presence of God in this place. We have no right to ask Him to bless us if we are not honestly expressing our faith concerning Him, and if we are not as honestly endeavoring to make that faith intelligent. This sanctuary, so costly and so beautiful, is of no interest whatever to the Infinitely Pure and Holy One to whose service it has been set apart, if it is to be the scene of perversions of Christian life, if its walls are to resound with perversions of Christian truth, if it is to minister to pride, and to worldliness, and to impiety. The Apostle is very bold, and says: "Though we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Paul understood that the divine blessing will never rest upon those who disregard the divine Son. It is idle to ask for it. Until we honor the Son, our worship will not be honored. But when we bring Him our penitence and offer Him our faith at the altar of His own priceless sacrifice; when we are cleansed by the Holy Spirit in the application of the pure water of His holy Word; when we accept Him as the Bread of Life at the Table which announces His enduring sufficiency; when we live and walk continually in the

light of the golden candlestick, and present our devotion upon the altar for the incense of prayer ; when we appear before the mercy-seat naming His name, pleading His merits, rejoicing in His example, obeying His commands, then may we expect an answer in love and mercy which will prove to each disciple of the Redeemer the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are the sons of God, and which will awaken such an interest in careless souls that they will inquire eagerly to learn the way to be saved.

Our theme carries with it its own exhortation. We have enlarged our sanctuary, that in it we may meet for worship. God grant that the worship here offered by us and by later generations may be so pure and acceptable that the prayer of the Hebrew king will always be appropriate ! Then as we pray that "thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day," we shall know that contrition will receive pardon, that faith will rejoice in the beatific vision, that consecration will be directed and stimulated, that hope will be sanctified, that sorrow will be cheered. Here the songs of praise and devotion will be heard, and the language of prayer will be familiar ; here "the truth as it is in Jesus" will be proclaimed, and the holy sacraments of the church will be administered ; here the union of hearts will be solemnized as a blessing is pronounced upon marriage, and here, too, the separation of hearts will be apparent, as the

mourners sit around their dead. Yet in contrition or in faith, in consecration or in holy joy, in the beginning or at the close of life, with promise or with memorial, Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Saviour, will ever meet us, and His presence will be our best evidence that God responds in love.



## VI.

### THE EFFICIENCY OF REFINEMENT.\*

*"That our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."—PSALM cxliv. 12.*

THE prayer of the Psalmist recognizes the efficiency of refinement. For he asks that the sons of the nation may be like plants, which are productive and beautiful, even in their youth, and that the daughters of the land may resemble sculptured pillars, which strengthen and adorn the interior of a palace. In the public life of the Hebrews, he sees the place of the young men who have been carefully educated, and in their domestic and social life, he believes that the young women, who are intelligent, may exert a powerful influence. Thus he associates activity and usefulness with refinement; and his prayer expresses the conviction that refinement is desirable, inasmuch as it can serve.

The thought which is thus announced is endorsed

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\* Preached before the graduating class of the Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y., June 19, 1881.

by Christ, and illustrated by His perfect life. His words lead to refinement; and His life, so pure and beautiful, was employed in helpful, self-sacrificing work. "He went about doing good." "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Instructed by the Master, the disciples of Christ have used their refinement to benefit the world. The world has been enriched by them. Literature, science, and art have attended their efforts. The standard of excellence which governs them is so high that a higher can not be conceived. They are laboring that we all may "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." For it is the belief of Christians, that the perfect man in Christ is "the best material and the best instrument for any great undertaking, or for any worthy enterprise that is not great, whether you would build a character, a home, a literature, a nation."

Thus Christianity produces a refinement which is efficient; and, as a consequence, the progress of the centuries can never outstrip Christianity. For while progress means refinement, Christianity means refinement also; and while progress demands a refinement which is useful, Christian refinement appreciates its work and is ready to accomplish it. Recently it has been said that "the new French socialism

waves its adieu to Christianity as a social failure, on the ground that alms-giving and resignation are its last words." But "we have not so learned Christ." Christianity, as we have been taught, looks into the future as the soldier plans his campaign ; stands waiting in the present, as the laborer waits for the opportunity of service, with loins girded, with arms bared, with shovel and with axe.

To the graduating class of the Packer Institute, the subject which is thus presented for consideration is of practical importance. Your feet are now upon the threshold. You are about to leave the quiet of the school-room for the activity of the busy, eager world. For many years you have enjoyed the advantages of education in one of the leading Christian Institutions of our land. Christian refinement, as possessed by your instructors, has done its utmost to refine you. You represent the ripest intelligence of the age. And now the question of your efficiency must come home to you with intense significance. You are young ladies of refinement. But of what use is this refinement? What can you add to the forces which are ministering unto human beings? Have you a noble purpose? Has your refinement been sanctified by a true consecration? Bear with me while I endeavor to open this subject and to present a few of its applications.

The aim of education is to produce refinement

—refinement is the legitimate result of education. There are, of course, many degrees and varieties of refinement, and yet each one of these degrees, each one of these varieties, is associated with education. The savage teaches his son to handle the bow, to ride the horse, to build the wigwam, to follow the trail, and in so doing he refines his natural powers so that he is enabled to triumph over the elements of nature, to subdue wild beasts, and to contend with hostile tribes. Travellers often wonder at the extent of this refinement. The sight is rendered marvellously keen, the touch becomes as gentle as an infant's breath, and the hearing is so acute that the faintest whisper is detected. Education among savages seeks this sort of refinement. From our vantage-ground we may despise it; yet when a comparison is instituted, it will be found that a brave or a chieftain has been educated up to the position which he holds in view of his endurance, his courage, and his skill.

The farmer's boy who has learned to run a straight furrow, to swing the scythe skilfully, to plant trees, to cultivate the fields, has secured a measure of refinement, which elevates him above his associates. In his own department of life he has become an intelligent man. His opinions are recognized; his influence is felt.

The apprentice who is learning one of the mechanical trades is seeking refinement. When he begins to

work with tools he is very clumsy and awkward. A great deal of excellent material is injured by him. He can hardly drive a nail, or saw through a plank. After a time, however, his hand becomes steady, and he is able to undertake the finest work.

In the school-room, where books are used, refinement is the aim of instruction. We enter the school-room in our infancy, hardly knowing who or what we are; we leave it in our maturity with knowledge of ourselves, and of what we can do.

You remember how forcibly this idea is expressed by Mr. Tennyson :

“The baby new to earth and sky,  
What time his tender palm is prest  
Against the circle of the breast,  
Has never thought that ‘this is I.’

“But as he grows he gathers much,  
And learns the use of ‘I’ and ‘me,’  
And finds ‘I am not what I see,  
And other than the things I touch.’

“So rounds he to a separate mind,  
From whence clear memory may begin,  
As thro’ the frame that binds him in  
His isolation grows defined.”

Thus every child is an experimental philosopher, and the refining process waits upon the experiments.

But the great world is, after all, nothing but a large school-room, and men and women all their lives are only grown-up scholars. Education goes on, and

education means refinement. An upward pressure is constantly felt; each generation makes an advance; new thoughts are presented; an interest in literature is awakened as the common wants of life are met; spirituality asserts itself; art summons the students who are to become renowned; science welcomes recruits from the quarry, the forge, the sheepfold, and the plough; the peasant's cottage is on the road which passes by the mansion of affluence or the dwelling-place of power; the plain, unlettered parent stands beside the learned and distinguished son as he becomes the chief ruler of a republic; the few articles of humble poverty are in contrast with the unnumbered luxuries of great wealth; appreciation increases; the range of life broadens; libraries are a necessity; a picture discovers its noble thought; a statue proclaims a principle. These wonderful advances are made with astonishing rapidity. Nations are really born in a day. It is almost impossible to grasp the significance, or to realize the meaning, of the educational tendencies which are now so influential. In every direction the refinement of life is going on. A great city, with its dwellings, its museums, its churches, its galleries, its parks, its libraries, its lyceums, is an expression of modern refinement. And this refinement, such as it is, is the impulse of the age. "Culture" has become the watch-word of the hour. Much that is superficial, and much that is dangerous, take shelter under cover of this



fair-sounding word. We are rushing on, gaining every year in refinement, pressing the necessity of education at every point, calling to our aid the master spirits of every land, confirming ourselves in the conviction that man's chief end is refinement, and that "culture" is the present Christ. Are we right? Is there need of a danger-signal? Can we discover any signs of a useless, vain refinement? What does history teach? What is the wisdom of God's Word?

A refinement which is to be efficient must possess certain moral qualities. One of the most thoughtful of our historians has remarked: "The difficulty of conduct does not lie in knowing what it is right to do, but in doing it when known. Intellectual culture does not touch the conscience. It provides no motives to overcome the weakness of the will, and with wider knowledge, it brings also new temptations." And he adds these significant words: "Tendencies now in operation may a few generations hence land modern society in similar conclusions, unless other convictions arise meanwhile and get the mastery of them."

It should not be forgotten when the opening chapters of Paul's epistle to the Romans are read, that the Apostle was writing to a people who had reached "the blossoming period of the old civilization, when the intellect was strained to the highest point which it could reach; and on the great subjects of

human interest, on morals, on politics, on poetry, on art, even on religion itself, men thought as we think, doubted where we doubt, argued as we argue, aspired and struggled after the same objects." \* To the Rome of the Cæsars, Paul sent the letter which exposes the real character of Roman refinement. That refinement was godless; and as a consequence it was destitute of the moral stamina which godliness alone can furnish. "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." The sad history is very familiar; we know how inefficient and worthless Roman refinement became; we remember how the high offices of the State were bought and sold; and the profligacy of Nero, and the brutality of Caligula, can never be forgotten. Luxurious living prepared the way for effeminacy, and effeminacy was the drunken seamanship which drove the Empire upon the rocks. "The Romans ceased to believe," says Mr. Froude, "and in losing their faith, they became as steel becomes when it is demagnetized; the spiritual quality was gone out of them, and the high

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\* "Cæsar," by J. A. Froude.

society of Rome itself became a society of powerful animals with an enormous appetite for pleasure. Wealth poured in more and more, and luxury grew more unbounded. . . . Even the most cultivated patricians were coarse alike in their habits and amusements. They cared for art as dilettanti, but no schools, either of sculpture or painting, were formed among themselves. They decorated their porticos and their saloons with the plunder of the East. The stage was never more than an artificial taste with them. Their delight was the delight of Barbarians, in spectacles, in athletic exercises, in horse races and in chariot races, in the combats of wild animals in the circus, combats of men with beasts on choice occasions, and, as a rare excitement, in fights between men and men, when select slaves, trained as gladiators, were matched in pairs to kill each other.”\* And this was the refinement of Rome, then the proud mistress of the world! Of Rome, then attentive to the eloquence of a Cicero! Of Rome, then acquainted with the poetry of a Virgil and a Horace! Of Rome, then enthusiastic over the victories of a Pompey and a Cæsar! Of Rome, then the resort of scholars, philosophers, and artists! As we look upon that life, even from this distant land and time, we are constrained to adopt the language of the Hebrew Prophet, and

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\* “Cæsar,” by J. A. Froude.

to say: "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

And what was true of Rome was true also of Greece, of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Egypt. In each of these civilizations there was a period of progress. Then a halt was called; all progress was arrested; a decline commenced; ruin was witnessed. The refinement was inefficient, and so it helped on the destruction. Roman life simply repeated the experiences which these other nations had known. Education brought the ancients up to a certain position, but their education could not hold them there. Something was lacking. Education failed to develop moral qualities. Yet Christian England has existed, and has flourished, for many centuries, and the evidences of her decay are not apparent while she is loyal to the lessons of her history.

Do we appreciate the importance of these moral qualities? Or are we anxious to secure an external refinement at any cost without regard to the real quality thereof? Alas! my friends, I fear that such is the case. Too little attention is paid to the grand moral qualities which make the highest refinement efficient. Too seldom do we emphasize the necessity

of God's presence in our education, of God's Word in our plans of instruction. But God alone can furnish those sturdy, moral qualities which refinement needs ; and His Word is a Book which contains the precepts whose guidance secures efficiency. At the Wyclif celebration, the last winter, a prominent lawyer closed his address with the familiar quotation from Burke, " Education is the cheap defence of nations," and with these words of his own : " He would have added, had his theme permitted, Bible education is the only secure basis for freedom, civilization, and progress."

The moral qualities which give efficiency to refinement are associated *with a consciousness of the evils of sin, a sense of dependence upon God, a conviction of the nobility of service.*

It seems, perhaps, a strange thing to say, that man must be treated as a sinner if his refinement is to be permanent and useful. I am aware that the fact of sin is often disregarded ; yet the fact remains, and its influence conditions human life. The denial of a fact does not destroy the fact. You may hear the leper's denial of the taint that is in the blood of his fair-faced child ; you may hear the workman's denial of the danger that is associated with the handling of nitro-glycerine ; you may hear the profligate's denial of the wickedness that debases his life. Denial never destroys a fact. Facts are stubborn things. And there is no fact which is more apparent than this ter-

rible fact of sin. Man is not innocent. Innocence never would have written the history of the world, as events have written it, with a pen of iron and with ink of blood. Sin meets us everywhere—in the household, on the exchange, in the senate chamber, on the farm, in the camp, on the battle-field.

And sin must be considered, if the interests of humanity are to be considered. The problem of education has this disturbing element. Many of the ancients realized this. Socrates appreciated it. Seneca understood it. The confusion and misery of life were sad facts to them. They tried to discover some method of redemption, by means of which prosperity and happiness might be secured. But they failed. For redemption can only be provided by God. In the gift of His Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, God has made such provision. Thus sin may be pardoned; a holy life is a possibility; friendship with God becomes the joy of a faithful heart.

But this relation introduces a sincere and affectionate dependence. Responsibility to an infinite Being is appreciated. "Thou, God, seest me," becomes a restraint and an encouragement,—a restraint when temptation is near; an encouragement when hope is feeble. The consciousness is formed that life and its service may be given to God. Spirituality is developed by prayer, and spirituality is the salt of refinement.



Then the nobility of service is recognized. Nothing is too good for service. The grandest use of life is service. "Beautiful," says Jean Paul, in a brilliant passage, "beautiful is the eagle, as he soars above the clouds and bathes himself in the clear sunlight! But how much more beautiful when he visits his eaglets in the clefts of the rocks, bearing to them their daily food!" Can we know this in practical life? And how? Is it an instinct? Does education always teach it? Shall we find that it is inseparably connected with refinement? Look around you for your answers to questions such as these! How many of the men and women who are cultured in the best culture of our schools, are doing anything to benefit the world? How often is it true that refinement is so inefficient that it becomes almost contemptible! Life is wasted in having a good time. Days and weeks and months are passed in receiving pleasure, not in giving help. The pound is kept in a napkin. Occasionally it is brought out for inspection by a few admiring friends. But service, real service, is never suggested. Club life for men, parlor life for women, are the ruin of our youth. There seems to be a sad lack of ambition where there is this willingness to live without a purpose, and to die without accomplishing anything.

Some time ago, as I learn from my reading,\* the

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\* "Duty," by Samuel Smiles.

Bishop of Manchester received a letter from a young lady, who excused herself from Christian work on the plea that she had no time. In the letter, the following account of her daily life was given: "We breakfast at ten. Breakfast occupies the best part of an hour, during which we read our letters, and pick up society news in the papers. After that we have to go and answer our letters, and my mother expects me to write her notes of invitation, or to reply to such. Then I have to go into the conservatory and feed the canaries and parrots, and cut off the faded flowers and the dead leaves from the plants. Then it is time to dress for lunch, and at two o'clock we lunch. At three my mother likes me to go with her when she makes her calls, and we then come home to a five o'clock tea, when some friends drop in. After that we get ready to take our drive in the park, and then we go home to dinner; and after dinner we go to the theatre or opera, and then, when we get home, I am so dreadfully tired that I do not know what to do." And is that a refined woman's life in England? Is it possible that a woman of refinement, there or here, is willing to go through life, as the bird cleaves the air, with no mark whatever left behind? If so, our refinement is doomed, for such inefficiency is only the repetition of Roman negligence and intemperance, whose destruction came so rapidly.

What refinement needs is an authoritative word

and a perfect life; a word which announces the nobility of service, and a life which shall go about upon errands of mercy. Refinement must understand that God can use the intelligence of His creatures, and that the most refined life ever known was freely given for the salvation of the world.

I have spoken of a woman's life in England, and have endeavored to point out the error of a frivolous employment of sacred opportunities. Let me bring you now another phase of life, so much more commendable. Kinglake, in his last volume upon the Crimean war, refers with intense admiration to "the priceless reinforcement of brain power that was brought to the rescue by woman" during the winter of 1854. Among the women who went to the hospitals of the Bosphorus was Mary Stanley, the daughter of the late Bishop of Norwich, and the sister of the present Dean of Westminster. She had the advantages of high social rank, of education in the best schools, and of foreign travel. Yet her refinement was singularly efficient. "Having long served as the very right hand of her father in bringing to bear his larger measures for the good of the poor, she soon disclosed great capacity for both organizing and transacting executive work, whilst also, in her own gentle way, she knew how to rule." That beautiful life, so rich in its capabilities, was given to the soldiers of the British army; and not one of its many graces was useless, because the refinement was genuine.

Doubtless many of you have read the exquisite delineation of home life which the Archbishop of Canterbury penned, when he sketched the life of Catharine Tait.\* There is another illustration of the possibility of refinement and efficiency going hand in hand, without departing in the least from the modest order of a woman's round of duties. Mrs. Tait made her Christian influence felt in every circle which she entered. In her own home she was a true wife and a devoted mother, and in the Church of God she was not only a sincere worshipper, but also an earnest worker.

Perhaps, too, you may have formed something of an acquaintance with Frances Ridley Havergal,† another devoted woman. Her gifts—and they were numerous—were consecrated to the service of her King. She had in Christian service the spirit of mediæval chivalry. Intense loyalty ruled her. Her musical ability, “and she was able to play through Handel, much of Beethoven and Mendelssohn without any notes,” was wholly dedicated to Christ.

“Take my lips, and let me sing,  
Always, only, for my King,”

was her prayer. Every one loved her. Her very presence was a benediction.

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\* Catharine and Craufurd Tait.

† “Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal.”

Now you may not be called, as these women were, to just such work as they performed; but there is other work, and plenty of it, and to that work you are surely called. God has a place for each one of you. These voices, which have been trained to such perfection; these fingers, which can play skilfully upon stringed instruments; these lips, which can speak in many languages; these intellects, which are so stored with knowledge—these are for service. Are they not? Answer then, each one, the call divine, “Here am I, send me!”

The moral qualities which are essential to refinement are provided by Christ in order that He may control education. He came as a light into this dark world. Upon the problems of sin and salvation He shed the light of Heaven. No wisdom can compare with His. He looked fairly at sin, and described it as it really is. He traced its history. He discovered its origin. He announced its inevitable end. We may apologize for sin, but Christ never did. We may make light of sin, but Christ knew too much to do so. Sin, as He understood it, is exceeding sinful. There is a corruption about it which only divine power can cleanse. In its nature it is deadly. Unless relief is afforded, the sinner must die.

And relief is afforded by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He has secured redemption. He is the mediator. Altars are no longer necessary, and priests

may be dismissed, and sacrifices have ceased to have any meaning ; for Christ Jesus is forever altar, priest, and sacrifice.

This great fact is the basis of Christian morality. Education has always accompanied this preaching of the Gospel. Martin Luther heralded modern education when he emphasized the doctrine of justification by faith. For that doctrine places a high estimate upon the individual, as it promises acceptance by God for the sake of Christ the Son. It has unchained and opened the Bible, and offered it, thus free and open, to the multitude ; and a free Bible and a free school will always be found in the same place.

Besides, through Christ God is known. He is the revelation of God. In Him the glory of God appears. And what a strangely wonderful glory that is ! How unlike the conceptions of men ! How sublime ! How condescending ! “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” No idol form can represent Him. No mythological conceit can portray His excellence. He is not like Jupiter, nor does He resemble Minerva. But purity and love are His in absolute perfection, for He is as Jesus was while here upon the earth. We do not fear Him, and yet we do Him homage. We do not shrink from Him because He calls us to Himself. He is our dependence. We love to do as He directs us to do. His approval is our comfort ; His friend-



ship is our joy. When we are conscious of any need, we turn to Him in prayer; when we are blessed with any blessing, we express to Him our thanks. Thus He is our spirituality, for spirituality never fails to appear when one is walking with his God.

Then, too, Christ speaks of service, and also illustrates service. He tells us what to do, and why we should do it. "The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him." If the "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," was ready to give Himself, what is my life that I should withhold it? If the well Beloved, who was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person," was willing to touch the leper's sore, to become the friend of publicans and sinners, to endure reproach, to be covered with the dust of an unbelieving city, to be crowned with a crown of thorns, to be scourged by common soldiers, then who am I, what is my refinement, that I should hesitate to give myself, that I should shrink from offering the little refinement that I possess, to my fellow-men? Thus "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Now the springs of Christian activity are touched. "For Jesus' sake" is the

motive which thrills many a heart. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" is the question which is heard on every hand. "Where is there work for the Master?" is the inquiry of all disciples.

I can discover no limitation to Christian refinement. Whatever is a proper study for man is a proper study for a Christian man. Art in its purity; science in its profound investigations; literature in its companionship with many noble minds; commerce in its exchanges; society in its friendly intercourse—these advantages are as much to the Christian as to any one else. The hand of Christ rests upon all truth and beauty and power. They are His. He claims them. They are to be employed in the ministry which He directs.

The applications of this subject, my friends, are evident. If I read the signs of the times aright, this eagerness for refinement has taken strong hold upon us. We appreciate the importance of education. We are proud of our advantages. But are we not in danger of forgetting that education needs the moral control which Christ can give? Do we not sometimes leave out the word *Christian* when we speak of education? If we do, we err. Our education finds its peril right here. The conditions of life are such, with our rapid increase of wealth and our magnificent resources, that a materialistic refinement can easily be developed. Then "farewell" to the republic and its

civilization. The old story will be written out once more. Education led to refinement, and refinement led to effeminacy, and effeminacy led to sensuality, and sensuality is death. It may not come in this generation—a catastrophe so melancholy—probably it will not. But that it will come, I am persuaded, if Christ is refused *that* place in our refinement which is the guarantee of efficiency.

Therefore, bring Him into your life. Settle the question of your relation to God. Accept the justification which is offered you. Become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Live with the understanding that God's eye is upon you. Ask Him to guide you every day and every hour. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Learn the lesson of self-sacrifice. Know that you can not be too wise, too gentle, too pure, too refined for God's work. Look about you, and see what you can do. Hear the cries of sorrow which come up from many hearts. No place for you, a Christian woman! No work for you, with your refinement! Condemned to uselessness, because you are without a vocation! Ah! my friends, ten thousand of the brightest minds are wanted, at this very hour, to consider, to solve, and to explain the questions which are pressing us! What of these class distinctions? What of the rewards of labor? What of woman's sphere? What of the administration of

charity? What of the relief of suffering? What of the methods of evangelization? Some one must tell us, and common, unrefined minds can not.

Our sons should be like well-grown plants, and our daughters like sculptured pillars. Man's work is not woman's work, and woman's work is not man's work; but both are Christ's. Some things can be better done by men than by women, and some things can be better done by women than by men. There is wisdom in a division of labor. It may not be best for a woman to cast a vote at the polls. Many excellent women shrink from such publicity. But it is best that woman's influence should have much to do in making that vote, by determining its character. When war was devastating our land, women did not march in the ranks of the regiments, nor did they handle the musket upon the battle-field; yet what an element of strength, of high courage, of holy patriotism was given to the war by the devotion of many women! Let us believe this. We must make our refinement Christlike in order that it may be efficient.

Of the youth of Great Britain, Mr. Ruskin was speaking, when he said: "We have to turn their courage from the toils of war to the toils of mercy; and their intellect from the dispute of words to discernment of things; and their knighthood from the errantry of adventure to the state and fidelity of a kingly power. And then, indeed, shall abide for

them, and for us, an incorruptible felicity, and an infallible religion ; shall abide for us faith no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear ; shall abide with us hope no more to be quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray ; shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these, the abiding will, the abiding name of the Father, for the greatest of these is charity.”\*

True of the youth of Great Britain, these words are also true of the youth of America. God help you, my friends, to carry your refinement into many homes, into many churches, into many towns and cities, as the efficiency of true Christian womanhood !

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\* “The Mystery of Life,” by John Ruskin.

## VII.

### THE QUESTION OF MORDECAI.

*"And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"—ESTH.  
iv. 14.*

WITH this question, Mordecai endeavors to break up the indecision of Esther. The fair young queen is in great distress. Haman's conspiracy has ripened. From the palace a decree has gone forth which means the extermination of the Jews. Prompt action is a necessity. Esther alone can hope to influence the king. Mordecai is her counsellor. She has sent one of her attendants to ask his advice, and has just returned her objections to his plan. For he has urged her to make a direct appeal to the king, by presenting herself at the door of the audience-chamber. Such a step can only be taken at the peril of her life. For if she is not then made welcome, she must be put to death.

While Esther is hesitating, Mordecai sends her this question, which acts as a spur to her courage. It is an appeal to the best elements of her truly heroic nature. Duty is made prominent by it. A



signal opportunity of service is presented. The divine purpose of her life is delicately suggested. The question covers Mordecai's belief. He evidently cherishes the conviction that Esther has been selected by God to secure the deliverance of his countrymen. He can not believe that the wickedness of Haman is to triumph over the promises which have written much of the unaccomplished history of the Jews. He is a man of large faith. The destiny of the chosen people is in God's hands. From some quarter, help will surely come. But is not Esther to bring it? Is she not "the anointed of the Lord" for this emergency? He believes that she is; and he wishes her to go forward boldly that she may discover her proper relation to God's work.

The question accomplishes its purpose. Esther dismisses her fears. A noble resolution is formed. After a brief season of prayer, in which all the Jews of Shushan unite, the queen makes her way into the royal presence. Her request is heard. A new decree is issued. The Jews in the provinces are encouraged. The day which had been appointed for their extermination witnesses their triumph. No enemy can withstand them. Haman and his sons are destroyed; while Mordecai becomes the favorite of the king.

As we accompany Hatach, the chamberlain, who is bearing Mordecai's question to Esther, we can hardly fail to realize that this is Mordecai's recog-

nition of the providential significance of Esther's life. With what skill does that great man put the question! He does not use God's name—indeed the name of God is not used in the Book of Esther—and yet his thought is all of God. He is a splendid example of a God-fearing man, whose reverential estimate of the divine interest and care is the deep, strong current of the soul. The Gulf Stream does not babble like the shallow brook of the pasture-field. It is silent as it sweeps by the shores of great continents, imparting life and fertility by its warmth. There is an easy familiarity in the use of God's name, which passes for pure religion, while it is not to be mentioned with the speech whose every utterance is an expression of dependence upon a Higher Power. "Not every one," remarks Jesus, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." We need to cultivate this deep sense of God's presence; and, in so doing, to remember that even the common lives, the uneventful lives, are providential. It is easy to form the habit of saying, "Lord, Lord"; but it is not so easy to bring God into direct contact with every thought and every emotion. Yet this is His true place. He made us for Himself. He wishes that each one of us should be the habitation of God through the Spirit.

For this reason, an especial value may be found

in the Book of Esther. It has always had a place in the sacred canon. The Bible would be incomplete without it. Its interesting records span a gulf which we could not afford to leave without a bridge. "It is necessary," says Dean Stanley, "that in the rest of the sacred volume the name of God should constantly be brought before us to show that He is all in all to our moral perfection. But it is expedient for us no less that there should be one Book which omits it altogether to prevent us from attaching to the mere name a reverence which belongs only to the reality. In the mind of the sacred writer, the mere accidents, as they might seem, of the quarrel of Ahasuerus, the sleepless night, the delay of the lot worked out the Divine will as completely as the parting of the Red Sea, or the thunders of Sinai. The story of Esther is not only a material for the noblest and grandest of meditations, but a token that in the daily events, the unforeseen chances of life, in little unnumbered acts, in the fall of a sparrow, in the earth bringing forth fruit of herself, God is present. The name of God is not there, but the work of God is."\* We read this ancient history in the light of related events, which bring out into clear prominence the operative causes; and then we forget that present events, with which we have to do,

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\* "Jewish Church," Vol. III., p. 201.

must also be operative. The good friends who watched over the infant life of Esther could not have forecast her wonderful career. She was the child of the exile, born in Babylon, and very soon left to the protection of her cousin Mordecai. He received her to his home as a daughter, and educated her with care. From his position in the palace, Mordecai became acquainted with the king's purpose to select a new wife in the place of the rejected Vashti; and he was also able to present Esther to the king, who accepted her as his queen. Then it came to pass that Mordecai, through Esther, gave information of a conspiracy which was directed against Ahasuerus himself. Afterward Haman gained unusual influence, and rose rapidly in the royal favor until he had surpassed all the princes of the realm. The one object of his hatred was Mordecai, who refused to do him homage. To destroy Mordecai, this wretched man undertook the destruction of all the Jews. The hands upon the dial of providence had reached the appointed hour. The significance of the life of a simple Jewish girl is about to be discovered. With high courage Esther ventures into the inner court, where all persons are required to fall on their faces and to cover their hands in the folds of their sleeves, and where executioners with axes stand ready to behead any intruder. Her first request is heard. A sleepless night brings the attention of

Ahasuerus to the records, which mention the important service of Mordecai. At her banquet, Esther acquaints the king with the plans of Haman; and then she receives the assurance of deliverance, which the king's decree quickly announces to all the provinces.

Now all this history is providential; not the conclusion alone, because the conclusion is dependent upon the beginning, but the entire history. From first to last there is a steady unfolding of the purpose of God. Yet the purpose is not evident until the unfolding is complete. We can not discover it in the cradle of Esther, nor is it plain when she is left an orphan; we do not understand it when she enters the palace, nor even when she starts out upon her important mission. We must wait. The entire life must be before us. Then its significance is clear.

I have not learned that there is any standard watermark of Providence, any gauge which must measure the stature of a life before it can become providential, any distinct limit which must be reached in order to secure God's presence. We may think that our lives are not providential because they are commonplace; and yet what right have we to think so? Has the commonplace nothing to do with Providence? Is the present time—so uneventful—a time to be disregarded? Is the present opportunity—so trivial, apparently—an opportunity to be neglected? It may

be, forsooth, like the cradle days of Esther. Who knows? Who can tell what great events may hang upon a kind word to a poor boy, upon the routine fidelity of a clerk, upon the turning to the right hand or to the left? You may stop any mature person with a question as to the providential significance of an ordinary action, and you may receive an indifferent reply; but you can hardly look for an indifferent reply if your question covers a number of years and the actions of a lifetime. Yet the many years and the many actions are but multiples of one. "Thou shalt know hereafter." God is not indifferent to the least any more than He is to the greatest. The stardust of the firmament has its place just as the great planets do. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." But then He also "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Nothing can escape God's notice. No interest is outside of His domain. We can not tell. Our judgment is fallible. Our trivial things are often God's great things. The eyes of the world were once fixed upon Rome where Augustus held his splendid court, while the eye of God was observant of a stable in Bethlehem, where a peasant and his wife were watching beside a little homeless babe. We can not assay passing events so as to stamp them at their true value. We must wait. To do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do, is the true



governing purpose, and to bring God consciously into all activity so that we may serve Him

“ In the trivial round, the common task ”

is the happy discovery of life's best secret. We shall be called to higher service if we approve ourselves in the lower. The end is not yet. There are men and women—not a few—who will go up to God in Heaven from the humility of earth's menial occupations to undertake the work of saints around the throne. There is another side to the curtain. Within the veil the providences of the present will open grandly to exhibit their meaning. Let us then, dear friends, be hopeful. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. The day is advancing ; our toil will soon come to an end ; misunderstandings will be clarified ; hardships will be of the past ; sufferings will cease. When the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, the patriarch began to interpret the mysteries of his life. We may think God out of our thought, but we can not put God away from us. There is love in the Father's heart, even when the prodigal is rioting in the far country. No day passes without a prayer for the absent boy ; no day without a wistful look down the road. God will not forget us. There are invisible cords which bind us to Him. Oh ! let us be responsive ! Oh ! let us be more glad of His leadership ! Oh ! let us observe even the commas and

the semicolons on the page of Providence! Some one has said that "learning rightly apprehended is not mere passive reception, as of water into a cistern, bringing with it all the accidents and impurities of roof or aqueduct. It is water in oak or elm, making its way up through living tissue, filtered as it ascends, shaking out its leafy banner, hardening into toughest fibre." How true of our knowledge of God! What a grand thing it is thus to learn our divine lesson, and become "filled with all the fulness of God!"

The question of Mordecai calls attention to the fact that emergencies seldom fail to test the quality of character. In the crisis of her life, Esther approved herself. The latent possibilities of her nature announced themselves when she started upon her perilous undertaking. She had never been tried. From the seclusion of her cousin's house she had entered the royal palace, where she had at once become a favorite. No one could have imagined that she would exhibit the heroism, the resoluteness, the address, which appeared as soon as she began her difficult task. Unconsciously, to herself and to others, she had been preparing for this crisis. God knew that she must meet it. His omniscience is more sensitive in its reports of impending danger than the barometer is of storms. God was watchful. The crisis found Esther possessed of unexpected strength, and it left her in full possession of that strength. She had

tested her powers. The memory of that crisis must have gone with her to the grave, and very often she must have looked back for encouragement when subsequently tried. These crises, through which we pass safely and with victory, become monuments in the memory of God's sustaining grace. We have a right to refer to them. "Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it 'Ebenezer,' saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.'" He was unwilling that the Hebrews should forget the goodness of God. They had been able to recover the ark of God, and to defeat the Philistines. A memorable triumph had been recorded. It was the Lord who thundered with a great thunder that day, and He had discomfited the Philistines. Why, then, should they not remember His interference; and why should they not hope for similar assistance in every time of need? Christians often wonder if they are right in looking back upon past experiences. In times of especial trial, when they have been very ill, or when they have lost property, or when friends have been taken from them, they have been conscious of God's presence, and have been surprised to realize such composure and resignation as they have known. Every promise has yielded its truth: every anticipation has been met. Then time and the shifting interests of life have diverted the soul, and new scenes and new occupations have opened new possibilities

of trial. The exposure is evident. Will religion prove helpful, once more, when a new crisis is met? Why not? The Psalmist, in the day of his trouble, turned almost instinctively to remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. May not we follow His example? Is it not true for us that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be"? May we not look for God in the crises of the future, because He has been faithful in the crises of the past? Most certainly! We may wait confidently upon His word; "for He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' So that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.'" It is in this way, and in this way only, that experience worketh hope. Men of the world shake their heads incredulously at this statement of the Apostle, "experience worketh hope!" No! they can not believe it. Contact with the world takes hope away. Inexperience is hopeful. The romance of life disappears as the years multiply. Disappointments are too frequent. Youth expects to realize the fortune. Old age is apt to be satisfied with the prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." But it is not so with the servants of God. Experience has satisfied them that the things of God are real. They have taken soundings for themselves, and they have always discovered that the buoys along the channels have been carefully located. God has been true. Every

time that they have felt for the Rock they have found it. Is it not reasonable, therefore, that they should hope on and hope ever? Yes! we may dismiss anxious solicitude. We know nothing about the particular future events of our lives. We must walk by faith up to the very last. We may be sick, we may be reproached, we may be poor, we shall surely die; yet God will meet us constantly; and if we are only looking for Him, we shall surely be calm and even joyful.

It is evident that God orders our lives so that we must meet these crises. We should not grow strong if we should be left without them. They seem to be necessary. Even the most ordinary events may accomplish this service. For God only can know how universal and how varied these crises are. The rich man meets them in one way and the poor man in another. Yet both meet them. There is no escape; and it is well for us that there is no hope of escape. If personal character is the one immortal interest, then surely he must bring the most out of life, who is able to carry with him into another world the most perfect character. The crises test us. We discover then our weakness and our strength. If we are wise, we straightway begin to do as the mariner does who has made a harbor after a terrific gale. How quickly he repairs his ship; and how eager he is to add strength to the rigging, if it has been severely strained.

Character requires constant testing. We must co-operate with God in His endeavor to purify and to spiritualize us. He has indicated the process. We shall ultimately rejoice in the result. I found in the book-store a short time ago a little volume of "Reflections in Palestine," by Gen. Gordon, the hero of the Soudan. The book had come to us from London, and contains some very interesting evidences of the religious views of that remarkable man. These "Reflections in Palestine" were written during the year 1883. In reading them, one discovers the secret of the man's courage, and also of his determination. He was a firm believer in God, in the inspiration of the Bible, and in the efficacy of prayer. His character had been tried again and again. He had lived through a very large number of the truths of our holy religion. "Praying for the people ahead of me whom I am to meet gives me much strength," he once said, "and it is wonderful how something seems already to have passed between us, when for the first time I meet a chief for whom I have prayed. . . . I really have no troops with me, but I have the Shekinah, and I do like trusting to Him." From Khartoum on the 3d of March, he wrote to the publishers of his book: "I am comforted here in my weakness by the reflection that our Lord rules all things; and it is dire rebellion to dislike, or murmur against, His rule. May His name be glorified! these people blessed and



comforted! and may I be deeply humbled and thus have a greater sense of His indwelling Spirit! This is my earnest prayer."

We shall not match His experience; and yet, in our own measure, we may draw upon His resources. Only let us know why we are here; only let us read into life its thought; only let us face toward Heaven, and walk with its glory upon us all the time!

There is still another thought in this question of Mordecai—and a thought of present interest to us all—viz., to arrest a great wrong or to avert an impending calamity, strength and influence should be given freely. This was after all the significance of the appeal as it reached Esther. She had become a queen. Unexpected opportunities of service had been presented. She might embrace those opportunities, or she might fail. The disaster had not yet come. It was only threatened. Should she step forward now and prevent it by her intercession? This was the question of that hour, and it is the question of every hour. The preventive ministry should be an active ministry. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." A very important principle was given prominence in the Mosaic legislation, when the Hebrews were commanded to place battlements upon the roofs of their houses. The house-top

was constantly used. It must, therefore, be made safe. Friends must be kept from falling off, just as they must be treated considerately if so unfortunate as to fall off. When our Lord was in Galilee He refused to dismiss the hungry multitude until He had fed them. "I will not send them away fasting," He said, "lest they faint in the way." He anticipated trouble. A large part of His ministry was exercised with reference to prevention. The Church has this as her great mission. We establish the Church of Christ in new communities with the confident expectation that she will become a mother to the people. We admit children to the communion of the church with the hope that we may be able to develop their Christian characters, so that they may resist sin in every form. A large part of education looks in this direction; and to these claims the ripest talents should be given. We need to look ahead. The wise man foresees the evil, and makes provision to meet it. His eyes are always open. Like a traveller who stops to pick up a stone and to throw it out of the road for the sake of those who may come after him, the wise man is considerate of the generations following. He uses his strength and influence, as a steward employs the money of an estate. They are for the benefit of his master's property. Can we make life brighter? Can we hold our fellow-men to spiritual interests? Can we cultivate the flowers and the

fruits to the exclusion of the thorns and the briars? This is positive work. It is surely better to try and make your friend a good man, than to try and keep him from being a bad man. The Gospel works in this direction. Its aim is definite and clear. Men are to be preserved blameless and presented faultless.

How often we find a man, after long wanderings amidst speculations and doubts, coming back to the faith of his childhood and accepting calmly his mother's Saviour! That mother may be in Heaven, where her prayers have been laid up by God. She may have passed away with the painful thought that she had failed to lead her son aright. But now her influence appears. The early instruction has not been lost. She has her reward. Oh! men with praying mothers, whose first breath of life was greeted with prayer, whose steps were turned toward the straight and narrow way by a loving hand, are you mindful of that influence? does it now affect you? are you conscious of its constraint? Thank God that you have it! Respond promptly to its pleading! Return from all your wanderings to give your faith unto Him whom your mother loved and served so well!

To most of us, the practical interests of temperance make their appeal right here. We are ourselves secure against intemperance, because we have been the recipients of a preventive ministry. We have

been educated to our present convictions. They are not the accidents of mere good fortune. Circumstances have exerted their influence upon us, and we have learned the wisdom and the expediency of abstinence from the use of all that may intoxicate. This is our personal safety. Now, what of our duty? Must we wait until men are drunkards before we exert ourselves? or must we now undertake to prevent drunkenness in every proper and legitimate way? The public sentiment of the age is already beginning to speak in answer to that question. We must prevent. The intelligence and virtue of every community must prevent. The strong arm of the law must be employed. Public sentiment must be cultivated. The individual conscience must be instructed. Here is a sphere for the exercise of strength and influence. The hope of the future depends upon this exercise. We can not afford to be indifferent. To each one of us the question is addressed: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

There are men whom we meet who have more than once stayed the tide of commercial disaster when it was beginning to rush with destructive violence. They have simply put forth their strength and influence, and confidence has been restored. They did not wait until the havoc of the disaster had brought ruin to multitudes. They appreciated

the situation. They anticipated, and so prevented the calamity. This is quiet work. It seldom goes out with music and banners. Yet it is heroes' work. The world does not applaud it as they do the clash and noise of war. Yet it is better. It may not find a place in history, but it carries a good conscience, and God pronounces His "well done!" You may have had such opportunities in the past; if so, you will look for them in the future. To this end, let us seek to be strong and to accumulate influence. A man may wonder for years what his strength is good for, and how his influence will ever tell. Let him not be impatient. His time will come. There is some good word for him to speak, some telling action for him to accomplish; only let him cultivate strength and influence for service, service, service, always for service; then, when he is summoned, he will be prepared to meet the duty of the hour.

If we have carefully followed the course of this strangely interesting history, we have already found new reasons for trusting God. If you can really trust God, then you are ready to enjoy life. God gives us hope. We never weary of God. Our investments with God pay the best dividends. There can be no bankruptcy there. The saints are perpetually solvent. Accept God, live for God, work with God, and then, oh! then, life will grow sweet and mellow, and its fair prospect of immortal blessedness will

solve many of the mysteries of time, and will keep from us despair and gloom and every foreboding. "Many a man has said," remarks an English essayist, "I labored to grow rich; I thought I should be happy then; I have grown rich, and I am no happier than before. Many a man has said, I labored to grow eminent; I thought I should be happy then; I have gained what I wished, and I am no happier than before. But the man never breathed who would say the like of the blessings of grace. The man never breathed who would say that he had grown weary of his Saviour's love and of the blessed Spirit's consolation; that he had tried them for himself, and found them empty and vain." Turn we, therefore, to God, who is always true, always faithful, always satisfying! He is near to us in the person of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Accepting Him, the Saviour, we accept God; and when we accept God, we begin to be ready to serve one another, to offer to our fellow-men a noble personality, to meet the great world with a strength which is divine.



## VIII.

### “THE SEA IS HIS.”

*“The sea is His, and He made it.”—Ps. xcv. 5.*

THE Psalmist looked upon the sea as its waters touched the western borders of the Holy Land. In his day, commerce had not become familiar with the great oceans which are now the highways of the world. The Phœnicians, who were bold navigators, sometimes passed between the Pillars of Hercules, and coasted along the shores of Spain and Gaul until they reached Britain. But the Hebrews remained at home, satisfied to enjoy the fertility of the hills and valleys which God had blessed. They were a favored people. Jerusalem was the centre of their earth. To visit the Temple and to participate in the great festivals made them supremely happy ; while to foster a national spirit and to keep separate from the surrounding heathenism, were duties which their children were taught to regard. The Mediterranean was their sea, and its expanse seemed limitless. From the heights of Carmel or from the hills of Judah, they could observe the vast extent of its waters, and could watch the ships which sailed to lands beyond

the horizon ; while upon the coast from Joppa to Sidon, they could hear the deep roar of the surf and could enjoy the variety and beauty of the ever-changing waves.

Into the poetry of the Hebrews, the sea entered as an illustration of the sublimity, the grandeur, and the mysteriousness of God. To their imagination He seemed to have kept the sea to Himself. They could not understand its secrets any more than they could understand His nature. The earth was theirs, and they had subdued so much of it as they possessed. But the sea—although it was spread out before their eyes, although its ownership was like the ownership of the firmament above, the common heritage of the race—filled them with wonder and awe and dread. God was there. His way was in the sea ; His paths were in the deep waters ; His footsteps were not known.

Centuries of heroic endeavor have added to man's acquaintance with the sea. Its shores have been mapped and its depths have been searched. One ocean after another has been explored, until now the inaccessible regions about the pole are those which lie concealed. Man's familiarity with the sea, however, has not made him its master. He can not defy the sea, nor can he disregard the authority of the sea. God has not given man the sea as his domain. "The sea is His, and He made it." How often this con-

sciousness arises in and takes possession of the mind ! Man seems insignificant when he stands before the mighty waves of the sea. His splendid armadas and his granite foundations are quickly swept away if the waters rage against them, and the sea measures its strength with theirs. The voice of a king is as powerless to arrest the rising tide as is that of an infant. The sea commands respect. Its laws must be considered and obeyed if there is to be escape from its wrath, or if there is to be use of its advantages. God is there. His voice is heard. His omnipotence is manifest.

As we sympathize with the devout Hebrews in their estimate of the sea, we can hardly fail to consider that the sea is a magnificent expression of divine power in the broad expanse of its surface, and the absolute control of its waves. Here is a fluid substance, always in motion, whose extent is far beyond our estimate, and yet it is held within its own bounds and under the most perfect authority of divine law. We go down to the shore of the sea and meditate alone upon this vastness and order. The waves rise and fall, the tides advance and recede, but there is no confusion. The waters do not overleap their appointed bounds. Steadily they lift themselves with irresistible power and then they pause and quietly retreat, until they are far off in the distance. Ordinarily, six to eight feet of tide may

be noticed, sometimes ten to twenty feet, and, occasionally, forty, fifty, and even seventy feet. The influence of the moon is responsible for these mysterious changes, which occur with the utmost regularity. We can predict when we shall have high tide and when the tide will be low ; we can also name the day and the hour of each month when the tide will be very high and when it will be very low. Without this control there could be no safety upon the shores of the sea, nor, indeed, upon any portion of the land. If the sea was permitted to rise and fall by chance the land would be deluged. But God has ordained such an order and made such laws, that the silent moon is charged with the important duty of maintaining the uniformity of the sea level. "As the moon moves slowly around the earth," the astronomer tells us, "her attraction draws up the yielding waters of the ocean in a vast wave which moves slowly along with her. The same attraction which thus lifts a wave on the side of the earth toward the moon, draws the earth gently away from the waters on the opposite side, and causes a second wave there. These two waves sweep steadily onward, following the movements of the moon—not real, but seeming movements—caused by the turning of the earth upon its axis." What a beautiful exhibition is this of that divine power which upholds all things ! How impossible it is to refer to an accident, or to a

fortuitous concurrence of atoms, or to any unintelligent force a result like this, which is so evident! I could as soon believe that stone from the mountains, and timber from the forests, and iron from the mines, and slate from the quarries came together of their own motion, or through a certain natural affinity, and combined to form a house, as I could believe that the tides of the ocean are independent of the existence of God. In spite of all modern denials, we must still cling to the argument of Paley to prove that design implies a designer. Effects must have a cause, and the cause must be adequate to the production of the effect. The irreverence which attempts to dethrone God is rebuked by the sea. His power is a sublime reality there. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

But there is another form, or method, of God's control to which we may refer. The daily motion of the earth upon its axis would pile up the mass of waters which compose the sea around the equator, if there were no counterbalancing agencies. But God has met this difficulty by depressing the form of the earth at the two poles, so that its shape is not that of a perfect sphere. In this way, the equatorial regions are elevated, and the centrifugal force of the daily

motion is met. Here again there are evidences of the most delicate adjustments. We have the alternations of day and night, because the earth revolves upon its axis; and we have sea and land in the Northern and Southern zones, because the earth is girded at the equator by a ridge of mountains. This, God's order, has been maintained from the beginning. Man can not affect it. Its operations are beneficent. Life and health and prosperity come to us from the sea, which God ever holds within its bounds, obedient to His purpose.

This broad expanse of waters is, therefore, eloquent with God's praise. We go down to the sea in ships, and sail away over the broad expanse. Day follows day, week succeeds to week, and month to month, while we still pursue our voyage upon the pathless ocean. It is estimated that three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered by this unstable element; only one-fourth is dry land, intrusted to man as his abode. He may use the sea, but it is not his. Upon it he can rear no monuments, he can engrave no inscriptions, he can build no cities, he can establish no freehold. He is a voyager, often tossed to and fro as the sport of the waves, often hurried to destruction by the raging of the tempest, and often speeding on his way to the desired haven with faithful chart and compass. God controls the sea. "The sea is His, and He made it." We may cheer our hearts with



this sweet consciousness. Friends beloved are, it may be, far off upon the sea, yet with them God is present. He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand. He rules the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise He stills them. Gladly do we wait upon Him. Reverently do we anticipate His presence. Tenderly do we commit to Him our cherished interests on the sea, and beseech Him of His great mercy to protect all those who go down to the sea in ships.

The sea exhibits the wisdom of God in the variety of its services and the abundance of its life. You have observed the phosphorescence of the sea as you have watched the breaking of the surf, or as you have made your way through the water upon the deck of a ship. How brilliant it is! Yet this phosphorescence is nothing whatever but the activity of life. Living creatures, many of them invisible alone to the naked eye, flash forth this magnificent illumination by their multitude. Mr. Darwin, the naturalist, once observed this phenomenon in the Indian Ocean, when it covered an area of more than twenty miles. "In appearance," he remarks, "it was like a plain of snow. The scene was one of awful grandeur; the sea being turned to phosphorus, the heavens being hung in blackness, and the stars going out."

The coral islands of the Pacific are vast cemeteries of insect life. Tiny insects have given their lives to the construction of these beautiful homes of the palm-

tree, where man has found a residence. Their number must have been far beyond any computation. Yet each one of them was perfect of its kind, and accomplished its predestined work.

Then there are the fishes and marine animals, so strange in their construction, so carefully formed by their Creator; and the plants of countless varieties, which hide their beauty in the depths of the sea. God made them all. They are His. With many of them man has scarcely formed an acquaintance. They are beyond his reach. He can only wonder and adore, as he searches the deep places of the sea, and brings forth the treasures which are hidden there. The sea is God's great museum of natural history, into which man may sometimes enter, and from which it is hardly possible to come forth without new impressions of the Creator's wisdom and skill. Life, life on every side, and life constantly appealing to the Infinite Source of all Life.

Mention has been made of the tides, and we should not fail to think for a moment of their services. They are the great purifiers of the earth. With their sweet, clean waters, they make their way into bays and harbors and rivers, washing the shores, and carrying off with them a great amount of waste and filth. Toulon and Marseilles, in France, have both suffered this present season,\* because their artificial harbors

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\* 1884.

upon the Mediterranean Sea are not swept by the tides; and London, the greatest city of the world, is habitable, because the strong tides find their way far beyond London Bridge. What a beneficent provision this is! How dependent man is upon it! Yet how seldom do we consider the wisdom which ordained and rules it!

The tides suggest the great currents of the sea like the Gulf Stream; and what a marvellous display of divine forethought is here! "There is a river in the ocean," says Lieut. Maury. "In the severest droughts it never fails, and in the mightiest floods it never overflows. Its banks and its bottom are of cold water, while its current is of warm. The Gulf of Mexico is its fountain, while its mouth is in the Arctic seas. It is the Gulf Stream. There is in the world no other such majestic flow of waters. Its current is more rapid than the Mississippi or Amazon, and its volume more than a thousand times greater." These currents of the sea carry with them and dispense heat and fertility, cold and moisture. They flow in many directions, and are the dependence of large portions of the civilized world. The nations of Northern Europe would soon be driven from their homes by frost and ice if the Gulf Stream should cease to pour its waters along their shores; and the Tropical seas would become too warm for life, with the intense rays of the sun pouring upon them, if their waters

were not constantly chilled by the Polar currents, which flow from the regions of perpetual ice. Thus the wisdom of God has made provision for the welfare of man in all parts of the world, and the sea is the intelligent servant whose duties are indicative of His omniscience.

Land-locked seas, like the Mediterranean and the Red, are powerfully affected by evaporation. This evaporation would dry up the seas in time, but for the fact that the currents of water made dense with brine flow out into the oceans, while the ocean currents, much lighter and with less brine, flow in to maintain the level. These two currents, the one above the other, are constantly in motion, and the result is the maintenance of the sea. Here is a new evidence of divine forethought and power. For God alone could have foreseen this necessity, and no power but His could have given such orderly and essential currents to the waters of the sea.

The sea performs an important part in the activity of the great law of circularity. This law secures the distribution of matter, in its changes, over the face of the earth. Nothing is lost. Matter changes its form without destruction. As the sacred writer has declared: "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the

sea is not full : unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun." Here is a most perfect adjustment, in which the sea is especially active. It receives the waters of the streams, and returns them to the clouds ; it arouses many of the winds which sweep the moisture-laden clouds to the regions of mountains and valleys. The activity is incessant. By means of it the atmosphere is purified, the early and the latter rains are given, and life is perpetuated. Very beautifully has a Christian thinker\* of Scotland expressed himself in his reflections upon this divine law : "Unlike man's best machinery, this process produces absolutely no waste ; not so much as a dewdrop goes amissing in a thousand years. A drop exhales from the ground as the morning sun grows hot ; it goes out of sight in the unfathomable ocean of air ; but it is not lost, it is in the book, and in by double entry ; it must and will cast up at the balance in its proper place. It dissipates from a daisy in your garden in June ; if stock were taken at Christmas, it might be found frozen in at St. Petersburg on the Neva, or sparkling as it leaps from the paddle of a canoe on an unnamed African lake ; it

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\* Dr. Arnot, "The Present World," p. 46.

might be found on a pinnacle of the fantastic icicles that adorn Niagara, or springing in the fountains that feed the mysterious Nile ; it might be found adhering to the feather with which a mother and queen is wetting the lips of her son and heir at the deep, dark, midnight turning-point of his fever, or constituting a portion of the great tear standing on the black cheek of an African youth while the white slaver is counting out the price and stowing away the cargo ; it might be found—but where might it not be found? Only one thing is sure, it can not be lost."

How admirable does the wisdom of the Supreme Being appear when its manifestations are considered! God hides Himself, but He acquaints us with His character. Back of and prior to these wonderful phenomena of nature we recognize God. He is our dependence. In Him we rejoice. His presence adds interest to every tint on leaf or flower ; to every voice of insect or of bird ; to every motion of cloud or sea. The earth is God's temple, in which His praise is constantly heard, while man alone refuses to do Him homage. Yet to man He has revealed Himself in the clearest terms, and from him He desires a service of holy love. Let us, brethren, recognize God in His works, and let us render Him the praise of reverent, devout, and appreciative hearts.

The sea announces God's supremacy in its ac-



ceptance of man's presence, and its co-operation in man's work. Man uses the sea by permission. He does not do well to be boastful. Experience has taught him to respect the sea, and the success with which he navigates will be measured by his consideration of its laws. Some years ago I passed a quiet summer night upon a vessel within the shelter of Montauk Point. An old sea captain, who had sailed in charge of whaling ships, was in command. As darkness came upon us, I observed that he carefully reefed the sails, and when I asked the reason of such a precaution, as there was no appearance of rising wind, the old man replied: "We can not tell what may happen before morning, and it is well to be prepared for any change of weather." The sea does not permit trifling. It co-operates most helpfully in the work of commerce, if commerce will obey its laws. But otherwise it resists with violence every aggression, and punishes with severity man's acts of disobedience. You or I are at liberty to build our ships as we please, to provision them as we please, and to sail them as we please; and the sea is at liberty to meet us in our folly and to dash us to destruction. If we meet destruction as the reward of folly, we are culpable. God invites us to use the sea, but we must use it lawfully. The chart and the compass are at our service; instruments of delicate construction to indicate approaching storms are within our reach;

experience has given us a record of many successes and of many failures. If we propose to use the sea, we must exhibit our intelligence and our prudence in our preparations to sail. A man may imagine that he is a hero, when he ventures to cross the stormy Atlantic in a little open boat, but most men will think that he is foolhardy. The Atlantic has been crossed and is crossed each week with the uniformity of a ferry service, but skilled navigators, obedient to the laws of the sea, are in charge of the service, and the wise man sails with those who have approved themselves upon the sea.

Is there not a thought here which lays hold on eternal life? There is a sea before us all. One day—we know not when—we must embark. The further shore we have not seen, nor have we seen returning one of the many millions of our race who have already sailed from us upon this wide sea. Yet do we believe that there is a further shore, for the same reason that we, who have never left this continent of ours, believe that, looking eastward, we are facing the shores of France or Portugal or Spain. Of those shores we have often heard. Credible witnesses have spoken of their interesting scenes and attractive life. We are somewhat familiar with them, although we have never visited them. We should be ashamed to question their reality, and that in view of testimony. Shall we accept the word of man, and then

shall we question the word of Him who spake as never man spake? Jesus Christ came to us from those blessed shores beyond the sea of time. He has described the land which He calls Heaven. In every particular his statements, so far as we have been able to prove them, have commended themselves. He is the truth. His character is perfection. We accept what He has said with joy: we anticipate the glory of the better land. It is there beyond us. We hope to reach it, and to share its blessedness.

But how? How shall we cross the sea? Is it wise to attempt to struggle over in our own unaided strength? Shall we be borne to the further shore if we cast ourselves upon the waters? Will the skiffs and rafts of our own construction hold together while we attempt the voyage? Or are we acquainted with a method, approved by long experience, commended by the authority of God, to which we may commit the interests of our immortal souls? There is such a method. It considers the requirements of the voyage. The laws of this great sea are respected by it. It has proved a safe transport from shore to shore. No one who has ever accepted its safety has repented of his choice. It is still accessible. We are invited to intrust ourselves to its promises.

This divine provision is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which we may accept. God has sent His Son to be

the Saviour of the world. He has spoken the word of life, and He has given His life to redeem us. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the only known law which meets the requirements of human destiny. If we accept this law, if we live by it, if we make it our dependence for time and for eternity, we shall reach Heaven and shall secure an abundant entrance there. But if we reject this law, if we refuse to live by it, if we cast it from us as our dependence, we can have no hope whatever of entering Heaven and of being happy there. This, therefore, is the only salvation, and it is offered to us freely in the abundance of God's love. As we must all embark upon this sea, whose waters wash the confines of each mortal life, should we not make early provision for the voyage? We know not when we shall be called to sail. Let us be ready at any hour, by simple confidence in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And what is true of this interest is true of every other interest which is under the control of law. Obedience means success. When we meet the terms of the law, we secure the promised blessing. There are exceptions to this rule, but they only confirm the statement. Obedience is a necessity. Life must be conducted under the reign of law.

Thus the sea rebukes our pride. We can not boast much, although we have accomplished much. We are dependent, always dependent. The little that we

gain we hold as stewards, and the little that we do, we do by co-operation. God alone is great. We should be humble, and docile, and willing always to acknowledge His supremacy.

And can we, in the presence of the sea, cherish an unbelieving thought? Can we, with the fool of the Psalmist's day, say in our hearts, "There is no God"? "The sea is His, and He made it." Its testimony is eloquent. Not only do we wrong God when we neglect to recognize Him and give Him praise, we also wrong ourselves. For life can not be rich and full and noble if God is not in all its thoughts. The men of the sea are seldom infidels. "They see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." They realize that they are in His hands, and in their hours of danger they cry aloud unto Him for help. Here are these many evidences of a presence whose control is omnipotence and whose wisdom is perfect. That presence must be explained. We can not refer this order, these delicate adjustments, this magnificent expanse to chance, nor can we feel any better satisfied if we simply talk about nature's laws. Laws are not operative. There must be a lawgiver and an administrator of law. Who is he? How shall we name him? Shall we say that the origin of all things is lost in the dimness of eternity? Shall we announce the conviction that matter, force, and motion will account for what is visible without any effort to ac-

count for matter, force, and motion? Or shall we read the record of Holy Scripture and accept its announcement that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"? Here is a resting-place. In God thought finds an adequate explanation of things which do appear, affection receives the recompense of confidence, and the service of life opens grandly with a divine interpretation. "Every house is builded by some man, but He that built all things is God." So we raise our heads to look upon the stars, and behold "the heavens declare God's glory and the firmament showeth His handiwork"; we walk abroad through the fields, and every plant, every flower, every insect, every bird, adds to our estimate that "the hand that made us is divine"; we stand upon the shore and watch the waves and hear the pounding of the surf, and rejoice to believe that "the sea is His, and He made it." For we have learned that He who "telleteth the number of the stars," that He "who clothes the grass of the field," that He who watches the sparrow's flight, that He who layeth up the depth in store-houses is our God, to whom we look with the confidence of filial love, who has made known to us His counsel, who has prepared for us a home, who has offered us a salvation, and who saves us by His grace.



## IX.

### THE PAST IN THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

*"He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people."—*  
Ps. l. 4.

THE heavens and the earth constitute the empire of God. He reigns over the entire universe. No interest is too insignificant for His regard, none is too vast for His control. The flight of the sparrow is observed; the cry of the young raven is noticed; the grass of the field is clothed: and at the same time God telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names; He ruleth the raging of the sea, and when the waves thereof arise He stilleth them; He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

In His government God is not affected by the limitations of time. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." To the divine intelligence, the present, the past, and the future must be an eternal now. A single glance of omniscience compasses the entire field of observa-

tion. The end is declared from the beginning. Events record themselves to serve the purposes of judgment. There can be no mistakes. Strict and impartial justice will be dispensed to every human being, when the Book of God's Remembrance shall discover its contents.

Meanwhile the present is steadily encroaching upon the future, and as steadily adding to the past. The car in which we are riding upon the invisible track of destiny is the present, whose advance acquaints us with the thought of the future, and leaves behind our impression upon the life of the past. We are constantly moving. The mile-stones of the journey disappear, one by one, after we have approached them. The end is soon reached; and the car in which we ride becomes as invisible to mortal eyes as is the track which must still determine our course. Looking back, we have the past, and that is historic; looking around, we have the present, and that is always changing; looking ahead, we contemplate the future, and that has no brightness, if it is not illuminated by the promise of God.

A theme for the closing Sabbath of the year thus announces itself, and we may hope for instruction as we consider the relation of the past to the present and the future.

1st. The present and the future rest upon and are the expressions of the past. "Other men labored,"

the Master said, "and ye are entered into their labors." No generation can be independent of the preceding generations. As David collected a large part of the materials with which Solomon built the Temple, so the energy and intelligence of former years bear fruit in the grand results which are now apparent. Parents toil and endure all manner of privations in order that they may educate the sons and daughters who become illustrious. They live in their children. Through their services to humanity and to God, they serve their day and generation. How quick we were to recognize this sacred relation, when the lamented Garfield drew to himself the sympathy of the world in those weary days of heroic suffering! The life of his mother, a humble woman, who had struggled bravely with adversity, made his life a splendid reality. Hereditary traits and ancestral conditions have much to do with success or failure. The pure blood of virtue and temperance means health and vigor, sobriety and industry; while the vicious blood of lust and cunning and tyranny will record its presence in the narratives of many evil deeds. Why does Europe dread the supremacy of the Bourbons; and why does France shrink from accepting the authority of the Bonapartes? Why does crime perpetuate itself from generation to generation; and why are the children of the righteous so often found in the places of their fathers? The roots of our lives may

be traced to a great distance. The beginnings of present results are often visible in the early centuries. Our lives are an inheritance. We have received a legacy of blessing, which we are expected to use; and in the using we are expected to increase; and with its increase we are commanded to transmit. How seldom do we realize this! The prodigality of the spendthrift squanders the fortune which his ancestors accumulated, so that there is nothing left for those who are to come after him, while his dissipation exhausts the physical resources which he has also received, so that his descendants are a puny, sickly, useless race. This law of heredity imposes fearful demands. It makes life intensely solemn. "None of us liveth to himself." The generation following may rise up to call us blessed, or else may appear to condemn a selfish disregard of our future, which becomes their present.

A survey of the past in its relation to the present can hardly fail to impress a thoughtful mind with a sense of dependence. Our common utensils are the implements of a former science. We do our work every day with tools which have only been produced by patient thought. Discovery and invention keep pace with the requirements of the age—never very far ahead, and yet never behind. We wondered once what we should do for fuel, as the forests were disappearing under the stroke of the woodman's axe. Then

inexhaustible supplies of coal were announced, and a method of burning coal was suggested. The farthing rush-light was succeeded by the more brilliant oil-lamp, and that by the brighter gas-jet, and a flame which is fed by springs in the earth ; and now electricity is prepared to illuminate our paths and to cheer our abodes. Each new thought is quickly appropriated and becomes a part of our working capital. We begin life upon an advanced plane. We handle the mysteries of other years as the science of things familiar. Our possibilities are greatly enlarged. Yet we can never forget our debt. Constantly a voice is heard—and it is more impressive far than the voice of the slave which sought to restrain the pride of the Roman conqueror by saying in the hour of his triumph : “Thou too art a man !” “Thou too art a man !”—a voice is heard asking : “Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ?” Boasting is excluded. Humility is commended. Our vantage-ground of opportunity is simply the splendid platform of past achievements. All literature, all science, all art, all religion join in the tribute of praise which commemorates the diligence of former times. The present is but a single tier of a splendid pyramid. It rests upon and springs out of the many tiers which are beneath it. We can not forget. We are fellow-laborers. The work is common to us all. Shall we not rejoice to-

gether, by and by, when the capstone is lifted to its position amidst shouts of "grace," "grace," unto it?

But a consciousness like this will surely assist us in estimating the importance of our own place and work. We are now the active generation. Our present will very soon become another past. There is a future, which must be affected by what we are and by what we do. In building a tower, careless masons will sometimes introduce a course of soft brick or stone, whose presence will become evident, when the weight of the other courses begins to be felt. History is acquainted with similar periods—periods like the age of Charles the Second, which succeeded the stern, heroic administration of Cromwell. They are weak and contemptible. No vigorous policies are outlined, and no useful deeds are recorded. Let us elevate the period of our influence and control above the plane of the commonplace! We should leave the world better than we found it. The unfinished problems are for our solution. Let us know what they are; let us have convictions respecting them; and let us give our talents and our time freely on their behalf. This is just what others have done in other years. May we not imitate them? There are the unsettled questions of the war, questions pertaining to the freedmen and their rights. There are the questions which affect the Indians. There is the absorbing question of Temperance. There is the Mor-



mon question. There is the question of labor and capital, and the question of charity. We need not fear that we shall exhaust the supply. That seems to be limitless. There are questions enough and work enough for us all. Let us not be idle. Let us not be indifferent. "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." We are making history. Our simple deeds are more important than they seem. God observes us. There is encouragement in His recognition. Who can describe the glory which is wrapped up within the benediction: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

2d. The past illustrates the principles which must be operative in the present and the future. Life has always been under the control of these principles. Even when men have been ignorant of their presence and activity, they have exerted their control. For the discovery of a principle is not its origination. The great principle of gravitation has been at work from the beginning, and yet not until Sir Isaac Newton expounded it did science appreciate the extent and character of its influence. The divine and

holy principle of love has always been true, and yet war continues to desolate the earth, and enmities and strifes abound. It is a principle of God's government, that "righteousness exalteth a nation," and yet the prevalence of unrighteous authority is a distressing spectacle in every age. A careful scrutiny will surely discover these grand principles which have conditioned human life. Now that we are searching for them, we shall make their acquaintance, and shall profit by their instruction. Just as the astronomer works back into time and space from the opportunity of each new discovery of planet, star, or nebula so may we inquire diligently of the past in order that we may learn the lessons thus presented. History moves in great circles, but the circles are spiral. We never return to the same point. Our apparent return marks a real advance. We are ever to remember that we are using the principles which made the past. They have already been illustrated many times; and we have them, in our turn, for illustration.

This should be the teaching of experience, which, alas, impresses very few minds. We are not ready to accept the testimony which comes to us from the wisdom and folly of preceding years. We must experiment for ourselves. What progress we should make, if we should use to the best advantage the experience of other men! How a father would rejoice,

if he could feel sure that his son would avoid the mistakes which have crippled his own life! How glad a mother's heart would be if she could know that her daughter would start out in life from the stand-point of the experience which she herself has gained and also expounded! But no, it seems to be impossible for us to learn of the past. We are not warned, as we should be, nor are we encouraged as we should be. Yet the past is an object-lesson, which God holds up for our instruction.

I should be quite willing to submit the whole subject of the advantage or the disadvantage of religion to the teaching of experience. What does experience say? We have this year observed many of the true disciples of Christ—friends, whose consistency has been most beautiful. They have walked with God. Some of them have endured great spiritual conflicts, contending desperately with temptation, or battling with the ills of misfortune, or struggling to vanquish death. We have watched them closely. They have been sustained, and they have been victorious. Out of the year, they have brought far more than we have. They are truly rich, because they are "rich toward God." He has been with them to strengthen, and to cheer, and to bless them in many ways. Can we question this? Is not their experience genuine? If so, may we not expect a similar experience, if we place ourselves under the influence of the principle

of grace? In other words, will not religion do for us as much as it has done for them? Certainly it will. "God is no respecter of persons." The promise is to us as much as to them. We may enjoy these priceless blessings. Why then do we fail? Why are we without them? Is God to blame? Or does not the fault lie with us? Yes! We do not profit by experience. The opportunity is ours. But we have not sought to embrace it. Our Christian friends, living here beside us, are our condemnation, just as the fertile acres of the faithful husbandman are the condemnation of his idle neighbor's wretched farm. We may use the means. Repentance is ours. Faith is ours. Prayer is ours. God's Word is ours. The Saviour is ours. And the invitation reads: "Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely." Ah! we are losing the very best happiness of life, if we are losing the precious blessings of the Gospel. The past admonishes us. We can not hope to hear God's invitation forever. The years of grace come to an end. God's Spirit will not always strive with man. We may be left to despair, even while life is prolonged. The angels look down upon no object which is more pitiable than a God-forsaken man. The Holy Spirit has been withdrawn. He is past feeling. The man is dead in sin; and for this death there is no resurrection. May God, in His infinite mercy, keep us all from this misery of despair, by bringing us

right speedily to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! But even with a degree of sensitiveness, we may still fail of securing everlasting life. For death may come upon us unawares. As we review the events of a single year, how many unexpected deaths we encounter. This acquaintance met with an accident. He was taken, and we were left. Another fell back in his chair, and expired. He was taken, and we were left. Still another was absent from business for a day or two, and then we observed the announcement of his death. He was taken, and we were left. A few only of the large number who have passed away had a clear recognition of the approach of God's messenger. Death usually comes as a thief in the night. Seldom is there time for intelligent preparation after that coming has been made known. The mind, enfeebled by sickness or clouded by delirium, seems not to have the ability to grasp the truth of salvation. At the very best, we dismiss such penitents with the sad feeling that our hope for them is only a "perhaps." They have been sowing the wind, and we have many fears that they will reap the whirlwind.

For there is a stern law of requital, which, for good or ill, the past illustrates. "The Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite." "A man's life comes back upon him." No power but that of the Gospel can arrest the operation of this law, or convert into

helpful chastisements its punitive expressions. Even the holy Apostle Paul bowed his head and accepted meekly the sufferings which he believed that he deserved, because he had persecuted the Church of Christ. His was not an easy Christian life. After he had breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he himself became acquainted with experiences, which he thus described : " Five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." What a retribution ! What a harvest after the sowing of tears and blood ! " This law," it is said,\* " keeps things equal. If any man could mingle bitter cups for others, and never be compelled to drain their dregs himself, he would soon become a devil. God shows him that his turn is coming. Every blow he strikes will be re-delivered upon himself ; every pain he inflicts upon others will sting his own heart ; every

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\* Joseph Parker, " Pulpit Notes," p. 65.



harsh word will come back to him ; his mockery, his pitilessness, his selfishness will return to him, and vex him like a plague commanded of God. All history has shown this." Speaking with the solemnity of one of the ancient prophets, Mr. Lincoln used such words as these in his second Inaugural Address : "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Is it safe then to do wrong? Is a violation of law traced upon the waters, or written on the air, or cast into the ground like seed? The recompense is certain. God is just.

But there is another side to the operation of this law, and a side which is most pleasant to contemplate—"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in nowise lose his reward." "Give and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom ; for with the same measure that ye mete

withal, it shall be measured to you again." How interesting and how instructive are these illustrations! They are the bright gems of the past. We admire them as we observe the respect which is rendered to a useful life, or the sympathy which goes out to an honored benefactor, or the blessing which attends the fidelity of children to parents. There is a gracious return. No investments pay such good dividends as do kind deeds.

Thus the past repeats itself in the present and outlines the future. The histories which the Bible contains anticipate all possible experiences—the varieties of joy and sorrow, of hope and disappointment, of love and hate. Rachel, weeping for her children, has her counterpart in the mother whose tears were fresh yesterday, and David, lamenting Absalom's rebellion and death, carries the sad heart of a father whose son is a modern prodigal; Simeon, whose vision greets the infant Redeemer, expresses the joy which is still known when faith beholds Him who is mighty to save, and Mary of Bethany, whose gratitude selects the offering of the costly spikenard, anticipates the devotion which in every age has been constrained by the love of Christ; Hezekiah, with the letter of his enemy spread out before the Lord, is earthly power taking counsel of omnipotence, and Daniel, kneeling in his chamber with his windows open toward Jerusalem, is the statesman on his knees in prayer; Jesus

looking into the face of the young ruler, and loving him, is the perpetual assurance of God's tender interest, and Jesus calmly addressing the widow of Nain is still the hope of many who are in deep grief. The Bible can never lose its interest so long as heart answereth to heart and the experiences of the race are common.

And we know that in the future—the future of this world, and the future of those other worlds—the two—these principles will still be operative. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” The development of iniquity, what must that be? The development of holiness, what must that be? Hell and Heaven! Everlasting punishment and life eternal!

3d. The events of the past move on before the present to prepare for the judgment of the future. Those events are awaiting. They must confront us. We shall have to explain them. Our use of the telegraph gives us some conception of the rapidity of these transmissions. Some time ago a crime was committed in England, whose punishment was promptly secured by the aid of the electric spark. Along the wires there flashed a message one evening to this effect: “A murder has just been committed at Salt-hill, and the suspected murderer was seen to take a

first-class ticket for London by the train which left S—— at 7:45. He is in the garb of a Quaker." In the compartment of the railway carriage the guilty man sat with his fellow-travellers, who had no idea whatever that he was a murderer. The darkness of the night seemed to be favoring his escape. He reached the Paddington Station in safety, and entered an omnibus, which soon carried him into the intricacies of the narrow London streets, where he might expect to hide. He did not know that an officer of the law, in disguise, was riding with him, and constantly watching him. Leaving the omnibus at the Bank of England, he crossed street after street until he reached an obscure lodging-house in Scott's Yard. Hardly had the door closed behind him when it was opened by the officer, who had followed him step by step, and the question was asked: "Haven't you just come from S——?" The record of the crime had preceded him. He was found guilty, and then punished. More rapid than the lightning's flash and more unerring than any methods of telegraphy is the discernment of God. Even our secret sins appear in the light of His countenance. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." There is no escape. "Whither," asks the Psalmist, "shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Hell,

behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Thus we live these lives of ours. Each event is sent forward as it occurs—the good and the bad alike. The past anticipates the present and joins the future. The old forgotten self reappears and demands judgment. The entire life awaits each one of us at the bar of God. What an accumulation of happiness as well as of misery! What bright lights upon the horizon as well as heavy clouds! The entire life is there; and the soul, the man himself, is steadily advancing to meet his own record.

An essay of an astronomical character was once written to emphasize the nature of this sublime possibility. It is well known that light moves through space with a uniform velocity, and it is also known that many stars are so distant that thousands of our years would be required for a ray of light to proceed from them on its journey to our earth. Indeed, when we see the light, the star may long ago have been obliterated; for the light which we see may have left the star before the creation of man. Using this

fact of astronomy, Dr. Hugh MacMillan, in a recent publication,\* says: that "the visible record of much that happened on our earth is still travelling by means of light through the regions of space; as the stars recede, so time recedes with them, and an actual and true representation of any event may be seen in some star. We may be looking unconsciously any night at some orb in the sky from which if we could transport ourselves thither, and were endowed with the necessary optical power, we should be able to see our Saviour walking upon the Sea of Galilee, hanging upon the cross, or ascending to Heaven from the Mount of Olives. And passing as swiftly as a ray of light from a star of the twelfth magnitude to our sun, the whole history of the world, from the time of Abraham to the present day, would pass in review before our eyes in the space of a single hour." What a spectacle! What a conception of the consciousness of God who "shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people!"

Then comes memory with its personal announcements. It is probable that memory retains all that is given to it. We may seem to forget a great many things which presently appear as our condemnation or acquittal. One of the Books of God is undoubtedly the memory of man. What a day will that be,

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\* "Two Worlds are Ours," p. 287.



when the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books are opened !

Life is solemn. We can not make it a pastime, or a farce. For even the folly, which trifles with life and opportunity, is impressively solemn. To waste life, to squander splendid opportunities, to flit to and fro like the moth around the candle whose flame is soon to capture and consume the silly one, to degrade intellect by vice, to spend strength in the service of iniquity,—what is all this but a lamentable abuse of the choicest blessings of God ! And if we have grasped the thought of a noble life, if we have become possessed of a holy inspiration, if we are moving in harmony with the divine purpose, if we are laying up treasure in Heaven—what is all this but a glorious use of sacred privileges !

But if life is solemn, should we not give heed to the approved lessons of experience ? How shall we learn to live if we are not taught, and where shall we find a better teacher than Jesus Christ, who speaks through the experience of centuries ? His requirements are few and simple, and they are all good. You will enjoy the remaining years of life more, you will accomplish more, you will send on to the future more happy events to await your coming, if you recognize Jesus Christ as your Teacher, and become in all things His disciple. Do you question this ? If not, then seek Him while He may be found.

Then we secure the blessedness of overcoming the condemnation of the past by the grace which Jesus Christ affords in the present, and the glory which He offers for the future. For "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Conscious as we are of sin,—and who is not?—we are also conscious that our Saviour has delivered us from the threatenings of all sin. For His sake we are justified. In His name we are blessed. Through Him we secure the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Therefore, His name is upon our lips, as we close this year, and as we look forward to still another. The past awaits us in the future ; but He is able by His grace to triumph over all its condemnations, and having preserved us blameless to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Come what may, we are safe in Him. For if in the universe there is one abode of perfect purity, of perfect love, of perfect peace, Jesus Christ has that for His residence, and He has said: "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

## X.

### DISTRESS WITHOUT DESPAIR.\*

*"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—ROM. vii. 24.*

THIS is the appeal of intelligence rather than the cry of despair. A brave and careful thinker has been considering his own spiritual condition. With the nerve of a surgeon, he has applied the knife of criticism to his thoughts and emotions until he has laid bare the centre of life. There he has observed the fatal nature of sin, whose manifestations he has witnessed in the foibles, the faults, and the crimes of daily conduct. He is depressed, but not hopeless. The work of reformation is a necessity, and he believes that it may be accomplished. A remedy has been announced. If he can secure it he is confident that he can overcome all his infirmities and maladies, and enjoy the perfect spiritual health which is life eternal.

It has been suggested that the appeal finds its

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\* This and the remaining sermons of the volume are related in the endeavor to exhibit the perfect adaptation of the Lord Jesus Christ to man's spiritual necessities.

illustration in the ancient custom of chaining a criminal to a dead body. The dead body was chained to the ankle of the criminal, who was compelled to drag it—a loathsome, decaying mass—as he moved from place to place. Under such circumstances, existence itself was torture; and a most pitiful entreaty was heard in the cry: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” However this may be, such a reference would properly express the humiliation and loathing of Paul as he contemplated his sinfulness. He was a noble man. At this period of his life he was in the midst of his most intense activity. His mind was doing its best work. He was the recognized leader of the advanced school of Christian thought. His horizon was broad. Jerusalem and the ceremonial law could not restrain him. He appreciated the universal aspects of Christianity. The philosophy of religion which he announced became the faith of the Church, and is still that faith. He was not morbid. There was nothing of the ascetic in his character. He never wrote a sentence without filling it with truth. “Paul of all others,” said Colet, one of the Oxford Reformers, “seems to me to be a fathomless ocean of wisdom and piety.” Yet—and this is the thing to be considered—here is an emphatic statement from his pen, which declares that spiritual help is a necessity—a positive necessity. He was conscious of the necessity. With all his

advantages—and they were numerous—he was forced to appeal to God for help.

This experience of the Apostle is calculated to raise a question or two in every mind. When such a man as Paul places upon record an estimate of his own spiritual condition, it is natural that other men should inquire if they are better or worse than he. If his experience is not exceptional, can we escape the conclusion that divine help is a necessity? Do we need it? If so, why?

1st. Spiritual help is needed to furnish every man a correct estimate of himself. Self-knowledge is most difficult of attainment. "In every nature," George Eliot remarks, "there is a great deal of unmapped territory, from which proceed sudden gusts of passion and terrific storms of malice." "Who," asks the Psalmist, "can understand his errors?" It was the painful result of his personal inquiry that led Paul to make his appeal for help. He had been alone with himself. The discovery of a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members, was distressing to him. Here was a conflict whose issue was doubtful. Evil and good were constantly striving for the mastery. The Apostle realized his weakness, and felt that in God alone could he find help. Yet his experience, be it noticed, was the experience of a godly man. It was reached

by him under the illumination of the Divine Spirit. Without that illumination he would have been an apologist rather than a confessor. His confession of sin and of the weakness of sin, came in connection with the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this strange. The dwelling into which no ray of sunlight enters may be considered decent and comfortable, even when its walls are covered with dust and festooned with cobwebs. The occupants may resent the suggestion that they are living in filth and degradation. But if that dwelling is flooded with sunlight its true condition is demonstrated. They are then without excuse. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," is the only prayer that is consistent with sinfulness. We bring ourselves to God in order that we may know ourselves. We wish to know the worst, in order that we may seek help of Him who is mighty to save. It is folly to say, "Peace, peace," "when there is no peace"; and "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." He is not an honest physician who dismisses his patient with the belief that he has some trifling disorder, when he knows that a malignant disease has begun to destroy him. Yet men shrink from the knowledge of the truth concerning themselves. They are ready enough to join in the confession of the Litany, which acknowledges



that we are *all* miserable sinners ; but when the confession becomes personal, when it touches individually, man by man, the members of a household, there is hesitancy and silence. It is very easy to repeat the Scriptural expressions—"our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," "we are all as an unclean thing," "I am a worm, and no man"—that is easy ; but it is, indeed, hard to kneel down before God, who searches the heart, and in His presence to say, "Be merciful to *me* a sinner." Yet this is the confession of good men like Paul ; and we may wonder why it is that we do not feel like joining in such a confession. Certainly we must believe that the most bitter, the most reproachful expressions that have ever been uttered in regard to human nature, have come from servants of God whose lives have been very holy. If I should wish to secure an accurate estimate of the sinfulness of sin, I should not question the inmates of brothels or dens of infamy, but I should visit some devout saint, whose pilgrimage had found a resting-place on the confines of the Better Land. "Fools make a mock at sin," while the saints have discovered that "sin is exceeding sinful."

This discovery of the saints, which is made through the experience of a holy life, presents two possibilities—one of woe, and the other of blessedness. The possibility of woe is the inevitable attendant of sin. Sin means woe. Unless sin is pardoned and cleansed,

woe is certain. Leprosy means death. The leper must advance to death through the terrible processes of his plague, even if he now carries on his cheek the healthy beauty of the leper's child. There is no cure for leprosy. And sin, if left to itself, if the infallible remedy of the Gospel is not used, must terminate in the woe unutterable, toward which Jesus pointed when He said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." I can not see, in reason or in the Word of God, how sin is to be brought to Heaven, nor how a sinner can find his way there, if he rejects the salvation of Jesus Christ. The gate is closed against him, but he has closed it with his own unwilling hand: the Lamb's book of life has no record of his name, but he would not permit the angel to write it when he heard the invitation of his Lord. God is not arbitrary. We can never complain, if our fondness for sin brings us under His final condemnation.

For there is a glorious possibility which waits upon the gracious endeavors of human nature. When we accept the help of God we may forsake sin, we may secure righteousness, we may advance toward Heaven, we may lay hold on eternal life. At once we become conscious of another and a spiritual world. There is such a world, as real as this world of farms and of cities in which we are now abiding for a season; nay, far more real. For "what," one asks,\* "is the tran-

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\* Dr. Shedd, "Sermons to the Natural Man," p. 20.

sient reality of these objects, these morning vapors, compared with the everlasting reality of such beings as God and the Soul, of such facts as holiness and sin, of such states as Heaven and Hell?" The outlook of repentance and faith is sublime. No heir-apparent to a splendid throne ever had such an assured prospect as the Christian has. He may look on from the things which are seen to the things which are not seen; he may realize that his inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, and that it is reserved for him; he may confidently believe that He who has begun a good work in him will consummate it in the day of Jesus Christ. His experience is prophetic. The plant of grace is an exotic whose bloom witnesses to the reality of a celestial Land. Only persevere, Christian, only press on faithfully, only prepare for the crown and the robe and the mansion. God will meet His promise. Faith will become sight. Heaven will prove the happy residence of the Christ-like soul.

2d. To present the ideal of a perfect life, and the method of its attainment, there is need of divine help. Our ideals are very far from perfect, and even if they do arise before our minds we know not how to make them real. The wisdom of the past, as exhibited in the writings of Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, or Socrates, has confessed its inability to form a practical conception of a perfect human life. It was

reserved for Jesus of Nazareth to announce the only complete life that faces with its cordial invitation every phase of humanity. We are dependent upon Him for our knowledge of this life, as well as for the method of its attainment. He has revealed both, and He communicates both by the Holy Spirit.

Here, then, is a real blessing which we all should welcome. Jesus of Nazareth appeals to the race. There is nothing sectional nor national about Him. He stood forth for the world and for the centuries in such a manner and with such a purpose, that "every man becomes more a man as he becomes more like Him, and that every woman becomes more a woman as she becomes more like Him." Therefore, as Pres. Hopkins\* well says: "If by becoming a Christian a man does not become more truly man according to God's conception of manhood, and as He would have him to be, and if in becoming a Christian a woman does not come to be more fully woman according to God's conception of womanhood, and as He would have her to be, then Christianity is a failure. This must be so, for Christ being according to His method the man, the centre of attraction to the race, that law of assimilation must hold by which moral beings are changed into the image of that which they contemplate with pleasure; and if there were not that

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\* "The Scriptural Idea of Man," p. 133.

in Christ which would thus bring to its full perfection the proper nature of each, there would be an arrest of progress and failure."

When we contemplate this perfect life as our ideal, we instantly realize that it rebukes all other suggested ideals, and its rebukes are so emphatic that it virtually destroys them. Here, in the perfect life of Jesus of Nazareth, the most glorious Being in the universe manifests His condescension. The greatness of humility is announced, the majesty of self-sacrifice is presented, the grandeur of holiness appears. Other ideals magnify strength and wealth and beauty. The soldier, the merchant, the favorite of the drawing-room, these are the common ideals which receive popular admiration, and which stimulate youthful zeal. But, at a glance, we can appreciate their imperfections. The soldier is Alexander, conquering the world, and then conquered by the wine-cup; or Cæsar, marching with victorious eagles from continent to continent, and unable to subdue his own personal ambition; or Bonaparte, deluging Europe with blood, and exhibiting in his household the peevishness and petty jealousies of a spoiled child; and the merchant is the man whose gains have made his heart stony, whose reputation in the markets is simply the report of his bank account, whose increasing wealth knows not the beautiful companionship of increasing charities; and the favorite of the drawing-

room is society's queen for a day or a year, whose crown withers and falls as the cheek grows pale, whose applause is hushed as a rival appears, whose name is forgotten before a new generation is recognized upon the stage of life. Alas! that these should be the ideals. They are not grand nor noble: and they attract most of us only to deceive. For the ordinary soldier will never become a great commander; and the ordinary merchant will never count his fortune in the millions; and the ordinary woman will never win the renown of society's queen. Yet we must have our ideals, and they must be practical. Life's problem is too important, too solemn, to be left for its solution to the vain endeavors of an unaided imagination. We are not to expect another opportunity. The problem is before us, and our solution must be handed in when God calls us to render our account. How shall we work? What is to be our conception of life? Shall we solve the problem with Jesus of Nazareth ever present, as the ideal of perfection; or shall we accept other ideals; or shall we neglect the problem entirely, and live without any consideration? We surely can not live without any consideration. The present is too intimately related to the future. The life that now is conditions that which is to come. We must take thought. No intelligent man can stand at the grave of his friend, or approach the hour of his own death, without considering the requirements of the



future. What will be demanded there? Will our common ideals meet the divine approval? Shall we find that power and riches and beauty receive a coronation? Does God care for these things as men do? Or is not the conviction borne in upon us irresistibly that the pure in heart shall see God, that glory and honor and immortality await patient continuance in well-doing, that the humble are to be exalted, that the life lost in Christ is to be found in Heaven? I am confident that this is a very general conviction. It is expressed in the conversation of my fellow-men every day; and especially do I hear it when they speak to me of any who have just "passed over to the majority, and joined the great nations of the dead." Then we eulogize these Christ-like traits, and commend them heartily as deserving our imitation.

This perfect ideal is a revelation. God has given it in the presentation of His Son. We are dependent upon Him for the acquaintance which we have with a perfect life. But this is not all. A perfect life would not be helpful as an ideal if we should be left to our own efforts to realize it. We need to know its method as well. How shall this perfect life be reached? We can not lift ourselves up to it. We may as well try and clutch the stars. It is far above us and beyond us. Yet may we hope to apprehend it, and how? Simply by regarding the teachings of Christ. He has made known the way. The method is His.

And it is a method so unlike any of the great variety of human suggestions that it carries upon its surface an evidence of its divine origin. Christ is the centre of a redeemed humanity. By the attractive power of His love He draws to Himself in penitence for sin and in faith in His person, the multitude of His disciples. They are united to Him. Then quickly and surely His influence is felt in the reformation of character. You may question the reality of this influence, as many persons have; but try it and know for yourself how strong it is. It can take the worst character and subdue every evil passion in it, and then make God's angels the occupants of the very dwelling in which demons once rioted. His is an approved method. It appeals to us all. We really can not live without it. Yet in accepting it we confess that God has been very gracious, that the help is His, that in these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son.

3d. We need spiritual help to provide a restraining and regulating force which is able to secure a perfect character. We must have an impulse. Is anything more evident than the fact that men fail to express their moral convictions? There are, indeed, very few men who do not approve more truths than they express. Mere intellectual knowledge is no security against wrong-doing. Some of the worst criminals of the present day are men who have been carefully trained in morals and religion. The Apostle writes

that the devils are sound theologians ;—" They believe, and tremble." We may assent to every statement of an elaborate creed, and yet violate every precept of the moral law. It is not easy to do right. The recognition of the excellence of Jesus Christ and the appreciation of His method do not make a man a Christian. A spiritual force is needed. Even after the vessel has been provisioned and after her destination has been determined, the driving power of steam or wind is essential. Let any man try and live the Christian life without dependence upon the grace of God, and what poor success he will have ! He may say to himself : " I understand this perfectly. I can be a Christian. I approve the ideal. I will accept the method. I will begin at once. Day by day I will fight the battle, and I will add one by one these virtues and graces to my character." Now that is an excellent resolution, if it only includes dependence upon the grace of God. But if it does not, it is not much stronger than a transparent bubble. The man will try, and he will seem to be doing well. While the undertaking is fresh and new to him he will not falter. Presently, however, he will feel the shock of some temptation, or he will become a little weary, or he will find that his endeavors are not well-balanced. Then he has nothing whatever to sustain him, nothing to fall back upon. His endeavors have been mechanical. They have not had any

vitality whatever. He is weary of the whole thing. And "the last state of that man is worse than the first." He turns back to his old life with a disgust for the religion whose blessedness he has never known. Thus it is that men mistake the shadow for the substance, the symbol for the reality, the form for the spirit. I imagine that there are men in mature life—not a few—who have passed through an experience such as this. They think that they once tested the value of religion, and they can hardly be persuaded that they made a mistake. Yet so it was. A sad mistake! They really had very little contact with the freedom and spirituality of the grace of God that bringeth salvation. If they had become possessed by that grace, if it had inspired and fed and ruled them, they would have rejoiced in its helpfulness, and would never have ceased to depend upon it. For the grace of God has manifested its power in many ways. It is the grandest of all restraining forces. Temptation can not conquer it. The man who is sustained by God's grace can meet any temptation. His strength is not his own. God is with him. He can depend upon God. A holy consciousness is his best help. From his closet of prayer he goes out to meet the daily experiences of life, with the blessed assurance that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." There is a divine presence with him. "Thou, God, seest *me*,"

is a realization which he gladly feels. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," is a promise whose rare meaning opens to his comprehension as the requirements of life demand. He is ready to confess with Paul : "By the grace of God I am what I am." Ah ! friends, we need this grace. Our temptations are numerous. Life is a constant struggle. Shall we not welcome it when it is so freely offered us by God ?

Then grace regulates our activities. A well-rounded character is the consummate expression of grace. From the centre to the circumference, grace acts with divine energy ; from the heart out upon the life, this sacred force manifests its strength and excellence. We may become symmetrical and comely and beautiful, if we do not frustrate the grace of God.

Here is another spiritual necessity. We must be aroused and impelled and strengthened and regulated in life ; and grace is the force which takes possession of, and thrills, and animates, and subdues, and ennobles us. This is the perpetual miracle of Christianity—a miracle as real and as evidently divine as were any of those which brought sight to sightless eyes, and hearing to dull ears, and speech

to the dumb, and life to the dead. Those miracles were expressions of the power of one who could speak, and command sight, and hearing, and speech, and life; and these miracles are also expressions of the power of one who can even now open the spiritual intelligence to perceive the glorious realities of righteousness and truth; unstop the spiritual ear to catch the faintest whispers of a sacred love; unloose the heart's emotions to sing the praises of Him who died; bring life out of death to triumph and to reign in glory evermore. Do we need this blessed divine force? Can we truly live without its gracious influence?

4th. To announce the consolations and hopes of invisible realities, divine help is requisite. How eager we are for consolation, and how dependent we are upon hope! Our exposure is constant. No Alpine tourist, threatened at every step by the impending avalanche, is more exposed than we are each day. Disaster, reproach, misfortune, sorrow, death seem always to be hovering around us, like the Bedawins of the Desert, who are detected here and there upon the distant hills. The unwary traveller is their victim. They dash in upon the peaceful hours around the camp-fire, or swoop down upon the line of march, or appear at midnight, when sleep has brought repose. How often we remark playfully, yet sadly, that the unexpected is sure to happen!



Our plans are thwarted, our health fails, our friends die, our lives glide away like the swiftly-flowing stream. "The strong men shall bow themselves." There is no escape, no exemption. This is the common lot of man; and in one way or another a sense of his dependence must be brought home to all. Happy is he who early learns the lesson, and ever after finds that God is his strength!

For God's strength is consolation and hope. He consoles us by giving us an understanding of the significance of trial; by opening to our appreciation, in the Holy Spirit's activity, new views of sacred truth; by drawing us closer to Himself; by making us to think more of Heaven. His consolations are not weak nor few. They place life in its perspective. They bring out the deep quality of life. The outward man perishes, and the inward man is renewed day by day. There is a constant presentation of the powers of life to the refining, spiritualizing presence of God. As the bleacher shakes the skein, whose wool he is seeking to whiten, bringing now one part and then another into contact with the rays of the sun, so affliction stirs the soul in order that God may have complete access to it in every faculty. We have watched this sublime work, which secures perfection through sufferings. It is rarely beautiful in its progress and in its execution. How often we remark: "What a lovely character!" when the an-

swer comes back, "Yes! she has been a great sufferer." Affliction alone is not good. Misanthropy and despair follow affliction. We become hard and complaining if we are often afflicted. Not so, however, if affliction and consolation are linked together. Then we become submissive and resigned and gentle, and we even venture to say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," or with Paul, "We glory in tribulations also."

For consolation heralds hope. When God consoles us, we have new evidence that God is near; and if God is near, then may we hope. God and hope, that is true; no God and no hope, is not that also true? I think that it is. I can not see how the man who has no hope in God can contemplate the future with any satisfaction. He is in the great procession which is hastening on to the grave. He can not stop. One day he must die. Then what is to become of him? He may say that we do not know, that we can not know, that we need not try to know. But that saying is hopeless. There is no light in it. "Whither, oh! Pilot, are you conducting us through this fog and darkness? What port is before us, and where shall we land?" And the Pilot answers, "I do not know, I can not know, and I do not try to know." Then the passenger is silent because he feels that he has little hope. We can not, in that way, meet the anxious questioning of the immortal soul. We must

have hope; and God gives us hope in Christ. He is the earnest of another life. His very presence is an unanswerable argument in favor of immortality. We have His testimony to convince us that there is a celestial country. If we believe His words, we shall have no anxiety, but a most comfortable hope.

“If my immortal Saviour lives,  
Then my immortal life is sure;  
His word a firm foundation gives;  
Here may I build, and rest secure.”

We have thus inquired in several directions respecting our need of God's help. We have found that without it we can not properly know ourselves, our condition, our danger, and our opportunity, nor can we form a conception of the ideal of a perfect life whose method will also be obscure. We can not, still further, live without the grace which must arouse our endeavors, and then restrain and regulate our characters; and we shall, indeed, be poor if we have none of God's consolations, none of His hopes to meet our inevitable sorrows and to brighten the shadows of death. Without God's help must not each one of us exclaim, as Paul did, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” There is no escape for us. Life is a mystery, and the mystery becomes tragic as its plot unfolds.

There is a solution. God does not mock us. We may rejoice in Him. He is never distant. His help is pledged. Oh! let us welcome it; and with its genial, holy assistance, let us undertake to solve this problem which is intensely personal.

## XI

### JESUS OF NAZARETH.—HIS PLACE IN HISTORY.

*“Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, ‘We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.’”—JOHN i. 45.*

PHILIP and Nathanael were devout men. A sincere interest in religion strengthened their friendship. They were waiting anxiously for “the consolation of Israel.” With ripe intelligence and responsive spirituality, they were ready to consider the claims of the Messiah whenever He should appear. The need of divine help was appreciated. It was not necessary that they should argue themselves into the conviction that God is able to give a revelation. That conviction had taken firm hold upon them, and they frequently dwelt with satisfaction upon the evidences of His love, which the inspired writers of the Hebrews had recorded.

The enthusiasm of John the Baptist’s ministry reached them in their Galilean homes, and led one of them to visit the fearless preacher of righteousness.

Philip—the more impulsive temperament—went down to the fords of the Jordan, where great crowds of people were under the influence of a genuine revival of religion: while Nathanael—somewhat more contemplative and retiring—continued to meditate in the vicinity of his own village upon the significance of these unusual events.

Meanwhile Jesus of Nazareth received baptism, and was formally recognized, as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Certain acquaintances of Philip were among the first converts. From them he heard of this new Teacher, whom they had already accepted as the Messiah. His religious nature was prepared to respond to the invitation, which soon secured his cheerful obedience and made him a disciple. Then as the journey was continued—for they were on their way to Galilee—Nathanael was discovered in the shade of a fig-tree, where he was resting for meditation, or prayer, or study. Hastening ahead of his companions, Philip surprised his friend with the announcement that he had found the Messiah—the Messiah so eagerly anticipated, so exalted in the imagination of every pious Hebrew, so certain to bring deliverance to the Chosen People. Nathanael hesitated. He could not bring himself to accept the Son of Joseph, the humble carpenter of Nazareth, as the fulfilment of the sublime prophecies which God had revealed. He



wished to ask a question or two. The faith of Philip might after all be only credulity. He demanded evidence. Yet he was a truly generous man. He did not reject his friend's appeal. There was no ridicule nor contempt in his attitude. He went to meet the Messiah, whom Philip commended; and in His presence, he quickly learned that God's response to the Messianic predictions is a perfect life. As he looked into the eyes of the Son of Joseph, he saw the Son of God, and his quiet, contemplative spirit rose to the height of a splendid confession, when he exclaimed: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."

The announcement of Philip, with his invitation, must be the counsel of the Christian to every inquiring soul. For religious inquiry is met by the life of Jesus of Nazareth. When we become conscious of our need of divine help, we are assured that divine help will reach us through Him. He is the Mediator. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"; and "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; and "of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is essential, therefore, that we should recognize His presence, that we should believe in His life, that we should become familiar with His story. Some of us are in the position of Philip and Nathanael, who were waiting for the appearance of the Messiah. Shall we not wel-

come Jesus of Nazareth as the Saviour in whom we may trust?

1st. The man who is convinced that he needs divine help, should be directed to Jesus Christ. When Paul and Silas heard the plaintive appeal of the Philippian jailor, who was sharply convicted of his sinfulness, they urged him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Their reply was prompt and decisive. In one way he could hope to find pardon; and that was by accepting the mercy of the Saviour, whom Paul and Silas had learned to love. The Scripture narrative says that he accepted their counsel, that he sought the pardon of Jesus Christ, and that he then found "joy and peace in believing." His was a notable experience. So well defined, so clear, and so true to the promise of Jesus, who said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On the Day of Pentecost, a sermon of Peter led many hundreds of earnest Jews to cry out in alarm, and to inquire: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were not children, for they were mature enough to be pilgrims; they were not weak and sentimental men, for they required considerable argument to persuade them that the spiritual emotion which they witnessed in the disciples was not due to an excess of wine. Yet when they were pricked in their hearts by the solemn truths of Peter's sermon, they were encouraged and comforted,

as the Apostle pointed them to Jesus Christ. On another occasion, he declared to the Sanhedrin that Jesus Christ occupies a position which is unique, saying plainly: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The same conviction governs the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he records the blessed truth that Jesus Christ is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"; and John, the beloved disciple, is of the same mind, for his Epistles contain many expressions of abiding confidence in the ability of the Saviour; "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

With similar confidence the Christian life of the centuries has met the unbelief of the world. The best results have always attended the commendation of Jesus Christ. Infidels have scoffed at such a reference of the spiritual anxieties and fears of mankind: and yet the reference has been made, and is still made, and the desired blessing has been known. The teaching of experience is emphatic on this point. The adaptation of Jesus Christ is established. Just as we have come to believe that light is adapted to the eye, and sound to the ear, and oxygen to the lungs, and truth to the intellect, and friendship to the heart, so

have we reached the conviction that Jesus Christ meets and satisfies the deep religious longings of the soul. A child born and reared in the depths of some dark cavern would not appreciate your descriptions of the glorious sunlight, of the song of birds, of the tonic of the atmosphere. He has eyes, but he can not be said to see ; he has ears, but he can not be said to hear ; he has lungs, but he can not be said to breathe. Let him come to the surface, and stand upon the solid earth, and behold the beauty of nature, and enjoy the singing of birds, and fill his lungs with the delicious air of the hills,—then may he know how carefully God has adapted one part of His creation to another. Thus, as Dr. Channing once remarked,\* experience teaches us that there is “a consciousness of the adaptation of Christianity to our noblest faculties ; a consciousness of its exalting and consoling influence ; of its power to confer the true happiness of human nature, to give that peace which the world can not give : which assures us that this is not of earthly origin, but a ray of Everlasting Light, a stream from the fountain of Heavenly Wisdom and Love.” This is our best intelligence on a subject whose importance is vital to us. We meet one another with these spiritual needs. Christianity does not create them. They are innate. Just because we are members of

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\* Works, Vol. III., p. 135.

the human race, we have them. What shall we do? To whom shall we turn? We can not laugh them down. They are too firmly established within us. We dare not mock them with frivolity. They are too solemn. We can not neglect them. They will not cease to make themselves heard. How then shall we treat them? What shall we say? Will education answer? Will science and art and literature quiet the awakened conscience? Will the names of Humboldt and Cuvier, of Raphael and Leonardo, of Milton and Shakespeare cheer the inevitable gloom of a dying hour? Has not the name of Jesus Christ frequently brought peace to king and to peasant, to philosopher and to child, as the realities of eternity have oppressed the soul? Yes! we are safe with this counsel. I do not hesitate to direct you to Jesus Christ. If you find Him, you find hope and comfort and joy, which will sustain you always.

2d. Jesus Christ occupies a position in the world which is braced by prophecy and history. I believe that there are many persons who have an exceedingly vague conception of the reality of the life of Jesus Christ. To them He seems remote, and even mythical. They are sorry that He is not now upon the earth, teaching in some neighboring town, so that they could go to Him, and look up into His face, and hear His voice, and thus become convinced that He is a Saviour. The fact that He was in Judea and

Galilee more than eighteen hundred years ago does not appear to satisfy the demands of faith. Yet He said to the doubting Thomas, whose faith was dependent almost entirely upon sight: "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The faith of sight is good, but the faith of testimony is better. A Saviour who is present to grasp the hand of the despairing Peter, and thus to rescue that ardent disciple from a watery grave, is a helpful Saviour; but a Saviour who is invisible to the eye, "whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," is really more helpful. For He, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, is "a Christ whom no distance can remove, whom the sick man can have in his chamber, the prisoner in his dungeon, the exile in his place of banishment, the martyr in his fires: present to the heart, more present than looks or words, present where the eye is blind and can not see Him, and the ear is deaf and can not hear Him speak." This is the position which He desires to occupy. He is not a local divinity. His aid is not limited by time nor place. "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is the promise which greets the aspiration of each individual soul in the Arctic regions or at the Tropics, in the first century or in the last. I once asked that most devout of our American poets



—Dr. Ray Palmer—to describe to me the state of feeling under which he composed his hymns ; and he answered promptly that a vivid consciousness of the reality of sacred things took possession of him, and that then the hymns appeared to form themselves. As an illustration of his thought, he repeated a few lines of the hymn beginning :

“ Jesus, these eyes have never seen  
That radiant form of Thine,  
The veil of sense hangs dark between  
Thy blessèd face and mine.  
I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,  
Yet art Thou oft with me ;  
And earth hath ne’er so dear a spot  
As where I meet with Thee.”

“ Now, that hymn,” he continued, “ as I was meditating upon our dear Lord’s sympathy, in the quiet of my study, came into my mind, and I had nothing to do but to place it upon paper.” We may almost envy the good man his possession of such a vivid consciousness, and yet we are not to despair of equalling it ourselves. For it is within our reach. We may enjoy this spiritual estimate of the Saviour, and then He will no longer be remote and mythical to us, but we shall find Him “ a very present help in trouble.”

How shall we feel our way back into the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph? What silken cord can we find which will conduct us through the intricate labyrinth of living and dead civilizations,

until we reach the imperial years of ancient Rome and walk the streets of old Jerusalem? Can we hope to obtain a clear estimate of the life which Mary nurtured and Pilate surrendered to crucifixion, whose lustre has brightened with each passing century and whose influence has raised humanity to a position which is prophetic of a glory still reserved?

There is in the world at present, an institution which is called the Church, and a collection of writings which is called the Holy Scriptures. There is, also, a distinctive mode of life which bears the name Christian. No one will question either of these statements. One end of a threefold cord is within our reach—the Church is a reality, the Bible is a reality, Christian life is a reality. And these three realities are as intimately related as the three threads of a cord. They are all of a very early origin. Yesterday will not explain them, nor the day before. They were in the world when Charlemagne received from Leo III. the iron crown of the Western Empire, and even when Constantine established his capital on the shores of the Bosphorus. By the consent of all intelligent historians they were known when Nero made Rome hideous by his debaucheries and crimes; and even when Tiberius ended his miserable career at Misenum in the year 37, there was a church, and there were Christians to witness to the reality of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Then, too, a portion of

the Bible—the Old Testament—was in existence ; and evangelists and apostles were soon to announce the New Testament, as the Gospels and Epistles, which now constitute a sacred canon, came from their hands. I have led you along a beaten path in our progress over the centuries to this very early date. The best scholarship is our guide. We can meet a Church and Christians in the year 37, and a Church and Christians and a large part of the New Testament before the death of Nero in the year 68.

Our guide, moreover, has conducted us across the broad Atlantic, between the Pillars of Hercules, over the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and into the country of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If we must look to Runnymede to discover the beginnings of English liberty ; if we must look to Wittenberg to locate the beginnings of the Reformation ; if we must go to Philadelphia to see the cradle of American Independence, we must visit the Holy Land to find the birth-place of Him whose presence is the only intelligent explanation of the Church, of Christian life, of the New Testament. The land and the Book agree perfectly. With an open Bible the traveller visits the scenes, ever to be memorable through their association with the *life*. The Jordan still flows tumultuously from its fountain spring on Hermon to the dull and lifeless waters of the bitter sea ; while Hermon still lifts its snow-capped head above the heights of

Lebanon to guard, as a lonely sentinel, the interests of hill and dale. Nazareth nestles as of old on the side of a peaceful, gentle slope; and Bethlehem welcomes her shepherds as in days when David kept the flock of Jesse. Olivet greets each sunrise, and from its summit sends tidings, in the glory of a bright illumination, that Jerusalem may prepare to honor the coming day; and the Holy City preserves, with an unconscious fidelity, many of the localities which the reverence of devotion will always cherish. The land is a study. We may rebuild its towns and cities, repeople its dwellings and streets, and move among the men and women who were the companions of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

For He, we may rest assured, must explain the origin of the Church, of the Christian life, the New Testament. "Shall we be told," asked Theodore Parker,\* "such a man never lived; the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived; that their story is a lie? But who did their works and thought their thought? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus." We may believe then that He lived. Indeed, we can not help believing this sublime fact. Interpret the New Testament as we may, sift its narratives with the violence

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\* "Discourse of Religion," p. 294.

of a most reckless criticism, and we must still believe that He lived. The main facts of His life are generally accepted. He was here among men. A life, rich and bountiful, had its residence in Judea and Galilee. The simple narratives of the evangelists acquaint us with its principal events. For, as the author of the familiar essay on "The Christ of History,"\* remarked many years ago, "It is abundantly demonstrable that the evangelists, instead of embodying a conception of their own minds, must have witnessed the life which they describe, never could have conceived it unless they had first witnessed it, and were able to represent it in the manner they have done, only because it had actually passed under their immediate and frequent observation."

While Joseph of Nazareth, with Mary, his espoused wife, were in Bethlehem, the child Jesus was born. They had gone to their ancestral town because they were of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled in a census which had been ordered by the Emperor Augustus. Jewish law, to which the Romans paid respect whenever they could do so without inconvenience, insisted that names should be entered in the respective family towns. Thus it came to pass that a proclamation of a heathen ruler combined with the national zeal of a God-fearing race to make pos-

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\* Page 24.

sible the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. For Micah had designated Bethlehem as the birth-place of the Messiah ; and the Jews interpreted his prophecy aright when they insisted that no other town could lay claim to this distinction. Soon after His birth the babe was carried to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod, who had learned that great expectations were associated with the birth of a babe in Bethlehem. Then, when Herod was dead, Joseph and Mary returned with Jesus, and made their home in Nazareth, where the boy "increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." There is no reason for believing that He was unlike other boys, except in the perfect freshness, purity, and beauty of His young life. He was with His mother, whose heart was filled with strange hopes concerning Him, and with Joseph, whose daily toil brought him into contact with the tools and the workmanship of a carpenter's shop. Theirs was a religious home. The Holy Scriptures were explained, and the devout psalms of the Hebrews were sung. Questions were encouraged and answers were patiently given. If there were other children there, and such seems to have been the case, then Jesus had the companionship of brothers and sisters ; and thus, even in His early life, His presence was expressive of the sacredness of the family. Nazareth had its synagogue, and the household of Joseph could not have neg-



lected the public worship of their fathers. The great festivals in Jerusalem also received their respectful attention; and at twelve years of age the boy was permitted to join the caravan of pilgrims who went up to the Holy City to the Passover. There He seemed to discover a wonderful capacity for religion. He drew to Himself, with magnetic power, the learned doctors of the Temple, who were astonished at His understanding and answers. But He was not unduly forward. Quietly submitting Himself to His mother, He went back to Nazareth, where eighteen years of His important life were passed in simple, humble labor. He entered the carpenter's shop, and did His work, day by day, for the people of the village. This—let us not fail to grasp the thought—was a most instructive part of His career. Greatness, surpassing greatness, is His by universal consent. He outranks the most illustrious of the sons of men. Yet He passed a large part of His life upon the earth in the ordinary work of a mechanic. He was a poor man up to the last, without dwelling and without purse. Thus He has ennobled labor and dignified poverty, and given His approval to a quiet, unobtrusive life, which meets each day's duties in the fear of God.

We can see Him at the age of thirty, as He bids His mother "good-bye," and starts out upon His sublime mission. There is a stir in the land. John the Bap-

tist has produced a profound impression. Jesus is on His way to the Jordan, where He is instantly recognized as of a superior quality, as possessing higher claims. "As when some unknown dread checks the flight of the eagle, and makes him settle with hushed scream and drooping plumage on the ground, so before 'the royalty of inward happiness,' before the purity of sinless life, the wild prophet of the desert becomes like a submissive and timid child." Such is Canon Farrar's beautiful comment upon the scene at the Baptism. From the Jordan, He goes into the Desert, from which He comes forth after forty days completely equipped for His work. He has been tried, and has conquered. He is now ready to teach and to preach, to suffer and to die. The busy weeks group themselves rapidly into months, and the months soon form the three years, which are the limit of His earthly mission. He went from place to place, instructing the people in righteousness, and healing the sick, and relieving distress in many ways. Consciously He met the prediction of Isaiah, who wrote of the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." As His influence extended, the enmity of

the Jews, whose venerated traditions He weakened or destroyed, became violent in its opposition. They could not endure His presence. At every step they opposed Him. Soon the cross and the sepulchre put an end to His activity ; and His name, covered with reproaches, was the ridicule and scorn of Jerusalem. Then to His disciples came the helpful, inspiring consciousness that He had arisen from the dead. This they believed with an intensity of faith, which no persecutions could weaken, no hardships destroy, no time efface. It became the faith of Christendom, quickening intelligence, enlarging activity, sustaining perilous undertakings in the interests of humanity, undermining old forms of superstition, and illuminating the horizon of each century with a celestial radiance. We accept it now ; and while we believe in "Jesus and the resurrection," we can speak to every anxious, troubled thought with a divine assurance ; we can guide every perplexing inquiry with a divine leadership ; we can soothe the agony of death and relieve the gloom of the grave with a divine hope. The fact—so grandly evident—that Jesus Christ has appeared is the basis of our strength, our courage, our endurance, and our peace.

And this fact stands not alone like some solitary minaret, tall, slender, and unsustained. Both prophecy and history brace it securely—prophecy, which has its records through many centuries, and which

demands a fact like this; and history, whose great foundation-stones are the events which are associated with this fact. It may seem hard to believe, and yet it is harder not to believe. Criticism is easy, and often cheap, but no criticism may hope to remove from the moral world this central Sun of Righteousness, whose control is evident in the increasing order of the spheres.

3d. Prophecy and history unite in commending Jesus Christ as the Mediator, through whom divine help is secured by man. We are not careful to explain, now and here, how this help reaches us through the mediation of Jesus Christ. The fact alone is for present emphasis. You and I need help. We need it sorely. We are directed to Jesus Christ. He is evidently a real personage. Through Him God's help is to reach us. For Paul, who is an acknowledged leader of Christian thought, has said: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." His mediation touches us on the one hand, and God on the other. When we submit to Him, we discover the blessedness of pardon, of sustaining grace, of a life which takes hold upon eternity. And all this is divine. Meeting the approved conditions, we secure the desired result. A holy life, strong and capable, solicits us. That life is within our reach. We may behold its excellence. We may consider its method. We may ac-

cept its aid. Prophecy and history unite in giving us a life. What gift so excellent? A life. What gift so encouraging? A life. What gift so divine? Help is sent us by God through a life. A life, which was lived upon our own plane; a life of simple, familiar virtues and graces; a life of absolute perfection which knows no decay, only expansion forever; a life whose service is self-sacrifice, and whose honor is humility; a life which confronts with its rebukes every form of prodigality, and which cheers with its promises faithfulness of every form; a life whose daily blessing is the divine approval, and whose ultimate coronation is perfect resemblance to the Lord. Oh! what a gift is this! Can we reject it? Are we willing to plod along in our own living without a glimpse of this sacred life, without a purpose to secure its excellence? God forbid! We are, indeed, a favored people. Our opportunity is sublime. We should embrace it. For we may fail of riches—most men do; and of honors, there are few who gain them; and of ease, life may be toil to the end; and of health, sickness may be our heritage; and of pleasure, sorrow may never leave us while we continue here; but oh! let us not fail of this life which God offers to us through Jesus Christ.

And to this end, begin now, in humble penitence for sin and simple confidence in the grace provided, and live forever with Jesus Christ as Saviour; for He is Prophet, Priest, and King.

My friends, when Philip addressed Nathanael and urged him to inquire personally of Jesus, Christian history had hardly written the first sentence of the record which now fills the libraries of the world. A day or two of a sacred friendship—that was all—was back of his entreaty. Yet Nathanael regarded the invitation, and his inquiry became his salvation. We come now with a similar urgency to commend to you a Saviour who has approved Himself in all parts of the world, in every generation, unto every age, class, and condition. Will you not look to Him as a Saviour, and seek the help that you need, through His gracious intercession?



## XII.

### THE GRACIOUS WORDS.—WHAT WERE THEY?

*“And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.”—LUKE iv. 22.*

WHEN Jesus entered the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath of His memorable discourse, He was instantly recognized as the Rabbi whose teaching had been received with enthusiasm in many parts of Galilee. Since He had gone out from His home, He had visited John the Baptist and had spent forty days in the Desert; He had selected a few disciples and had exhibited His power at Cana, where water was converted into wine; He had made an impression upon the Jews of Jerusalem, to whom He had formally presented Himself as the Messiah, and He had continued His labors in Judea after His Messianic claims had been rejected by the leaders of the Chosen People; He had returned through Samaria into His own country, where His voice had been heard in many synagogues. With an established reputation, with a recognized popularity, He came back to Naza-

reth, and promptly responded to the desire of His townsmen that He should address them. The roll of the prophecy of Isaiah, which contained the second Scripture lesson of the day, was placed in His hands, and after He had selected a passage in what is now known as the 61st chapter of that sublime revelation, He began to read. When He had read but one sentence of the prophecy, He paused, rolled up the parchment, handed it to the attendant, and sat down. These actions were indicative of His intention to speak. Instantly every eye was fixed upon Him.

To the amazement of His hearers, He said that the venerated prophecy, which so evidently anticipated the appearance of the Messiah, was fulfilled by His presence, and that it was His mission to bless the poor, to cheer the afflicted, to give liberty to the captive, and knowledge to the ignorant, and freedom to the slave, and thus to introduce the year of jubilee. These startling announcements were followed by an exposition of the truth of Redemption, which led that audience of Nazarenes through many varieties of intense feeling. At first they were charmed by His manner; then they became curious as they observed His composure, and associated His claims with His very humble station in life; soon they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; then they began to whisper questions to one another, which were expressive of jealousy;

at last their wrath over His assumptions could not be restrained. They denounced Him openly. With the vehemence of a mob they rushed upon Him, drove Him out of the synagogue, hurried Him to a rocky eminence near by, and prepared to cast Him down headlong. But He escaped their violence, and crossing the hills to Capernaum established His residence in that friendly city.

This sermon, preached in the synagogue of Nazareth, announced the idea which He continued to elaborate and enforce. What that idea is, and what its applications are, may be known by any disciple who studies the teaching of Jesus. The record of that teaching, as it is found in the Gospels, is easily understood. Within the compass of a small tract, His words may all be contained. An hour or two will suffice for their reading. But no one can estimate their influence; no one can sound their depths; no one can measure their expansive possibilities. They have met each new life with a pertinent lesson; they have addressed each new social condition with their counsel and hope; they have exhibited an adaptation to every phase of human need; they carry the promise of everlasting blessedness in the perfection of eternal life. What, then, is this important teaching? What did He say?

1st. In His teaching, Jesus Christ insisted upon the necessity of a personal union with God. The

conception of this sacred union was the central idea of His teaching. He recognized the fact, so painfully evident, that there has been a rebellion which has separated God and man. Man draws away from, and defies the authority of, God. He does not wish to retain God in his knowledge. If he could have his own way, he would dispense with God entirely. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." How frequently endeavors have been put forth to construct a theory of creation, of natural and moral order, which shall contain no recognition of God! How often a bitter resistance is encountered when the authority of God is emphasized and the demands of His Word are pressed upon the conscience! Yet why should man hate God, why should man shrink back from God, why should man hesitate to welcome cordially every overture on the part of God? God is infinitely glorious, and the truest dignity of life must be associated with the blessedness of receiving Him. The question should never arise—and but for sin it would never arise—as to my willingness to be the friend of God; for there is another question of far greater moment to me, which brings me to inquire as to God's willingness to be my friend. Sin alone can answer for this unbelief. But for the separating, repelling influence of sin, every man would turn to God as naturally and promptly as the flowers turn to the sun. Sin, however, awakens prejudices,

misunderstandings, bitterness of feeling, so that the gracious Father of us all is neglected and even hated by the children whom He blesses every day. How many men there are upon our streets—good men as the estimate of the world goes—who never recognize God in prayer or praise! They are engrossed with the cares of business. The consciousness of God has gone out of their lives. They will tell you what they do not believe about God, and yet they seldom arrange the thoughts which are indicative of a positive belief in His power and love. Surely they are not united to God! Whatever advantages may be realized from union with Him, they are unable to say that they possess them. Life moves swiftly to its close; opportunity ceases to extend its invitations. The last word is spoken. The realities of an eternal state must be met without hope in God. Why should this be so? What excuse can be given for neglect like this? Is it not a fearful evidence of the sinfulness of sin that goodness and purity and holiness and love in God are rejected by a weak, feeble mortal, who is dependent in every hour of his life, and who is rapidly hastening to the tomb?

With an insight which itself is an argument in favor of His divine origin, Jesus Christ pointed to this estrangement between God and man as the deep-seated cause of all present difficulties. He did not grope His way to this profound estimate. It was

announced at the beginning of His public ministry. When He entered upon His career He began to proclaim the presence of the kingdom of God, and the consequent necessity of repentance. This kingdom, it has been said, "is the reign of God in men, when the Father of minds shall be known, loved, and revered by His children. It is the reign of righteousness, purity, truth, love, and peace, the universal reception and dominion among men of all true, just, holy, generous, and divine principles. It is the highest stage of religious, moral, intellectual, social, and individual cultivation. It is the noblest development possible on this earth of all the attributes and capabilities of humanity. It is spiritual victory after the battle of thousands of ages. It is the triumph of good and of God over moral and physical evil."

In His prayer of intercession, Jesus Christ evidently reviews His work. The leading features of that work are enumerated as the basis, or ground, of the plea which He presents on behalf of all Christians. We discover, at once, His central idea. Again and again in the course of the prayer He refers to the union which He has established between God and man, as well as to His desire that this union may extend until it shall include a countless multitude, "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."



To make this sublime idea a possibility, it was essential that man should be made acquainted with God. God's character must be known, God's purpose must be appreciated, God's love must be announced, if man is to be united to God. For no man of himself imagines that God really wishes to be his friend, that God is willing to accept him just as he is, that God is seeking him with an intensity of solicitude which is the marvel of revelation. The prevalent feeling is that a man must fix himself up to appear before God, that he must make himself better, that he must do something to merit the divine favor. Jesus Christ brushed away every one of those misty conceptions about God, to reveal the clear outlines of the Father's benignant countenance. He exhibited God's interest in a sinful race, and made very evident God's desire to have man united to Him. He gave the assurance of God's willingness to impart His own life to the soul of the penitent believer. He taught the language of a prayer, whose first sentence, "Our Father, which art in Heaven," is the announcement of splendid possibilities. He brought God out of the dimness of obscurity into the reality of daily life, from the hills and the caves and the oceans, where the superstitions of mythology had fixed the residences of many divinities, into the cities, the homes, and the hearts of our race, from the attitude of a dreaded, avenging Nemesis to that of a considerate

loving friend. God stands with outstretched hands of welcome, with tender entreaties of solicitude, with gentle persuasiveness in every appeal, to call to Himself a guilty, weak, and helpless race. We have the assurance that He desires us; and we have the added assurance that we are capable of meeting Him, of enjoying His love, of being thus united to Him.

All this is included in the teaching of Jesus Christ. He has made us acquainted with God, and He has made us acquainted with ourselves. Then He has still further explained the method of this most desirable union, by what He has said respecting His own death. For that death has removed every obstacle which has stood in the way of our acceptance, and it makes to us all a most influential appeal. Never does God's love seem so strong as when we contemplate its manifestation in the death upon the cross, and never does His appeal seem so tender as when we hear it from the lips which uttered the agonizing cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "Assuredly," observes one of the foremost men of our times,\* "no other had ever conceived of a personal God, of an infinite power, with a pure and awful holiness of spirit, yet careful of the humblest, mindful of the meanest, and with the temper of utter self-sacrifice for the welfare of others paramount in

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\* Dr. R. S. Storrs.

Him!" Yet this was the idea of Jesus of Nazareth, these were "the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Union with God is possible; union with God is necessary; union with God is the sublime consummation of every noble hope.

2d. In His teaching, Jesus Christ announced a personal union with God as a seed-truth, which opens to influence every condition of life. There are a few truths which are of universal application. The natural world is affected in every smallest atom by the principle of gravitation, and the spiritual world is intimately related to the sublime truth of man's union with God. This truth touches the characters, the fortunes, the destinies of human beings in all the wide range of diversified personal interests. It has convictions for the sinner and consolations for the saint; it has a strong, helpful hand for the weak, and most cordial relief for the distressed; it breaks the fetters which bind the slave, and suggests a solution of the many problems which arise between strength and feebleness; it anticipates a golden age, whose quiet prosperity will be the reign of love, and prepares for a celestial residence which knows sin only as a memory. The great Teacher understood Himself when He refused to be diverted from its proclamation. He was wiser than His generation, in which there were many learned men, who were seeking to establish theories of government and social order. They would have

been glad to have heard from Him upon the subjects of pressing interest. The Roman Empire had recently come into existence,—would He favor an Empire or a Republic? An elaborate revenue system was operative, would He approve its methods, or could He suggest one better? Intemperance was a common and a destructive vice, would He advance any special counsels on the use of intoxicating drinks? Slavery was prevalent, would He advocate emancipation? The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor, would He advise a redistribution of property, the enactment of corn laws, any regulation of wages? Judaism was regarded as an exclusive national religion, would He outline a new religious policy, with a complete organization, an elaborate ritual, a prescribed code? A great variety of religions were recognized in the different parts of the world, would He consider this diversity in His announcements of the truth? The preëminent greatness of Jesus Christ was manifested in His self-restraint, in what He did not say. He had not been a pupil of any famous school, nor had He been a man of cities, where thought is broader than it is in provincial towns, nor had He travelled into foreign parts to study the customs and needs of his fellow-men. He was a Nazarene; and Nazareth was renowned for illiberality and narrowness of spirit. Yet when He began to teach He announced a truth, which is the germ of every important

truth, whose influence touches individual or social life. This truth He grasped firmly. Nothing could shake His hold upon it. He appreciated its character, and He was convinced that He could best do His work as a teacher by insisting upon its importance. His was the prophet's vision. He saw the interests of life in their true relation. Consequently He often seemed to be conservative and timid when the enthusiasm of His admirers found Him unwilling to rush into the political arena or to head a popular revolt. He, however, was wiser than they. They would have had Him strike a blow, which would have wounded or bruised some monster of tyranny or vice, while He was resolutely preparing to destroy the monster. For the truth of union with God when once accepted, would inevitably break up venerable systems of superstition, of slavery, of social oppression, inasmuch as the prevalence of this union would make men considerate and forgiving, gentle and kind, and thus, by securing a new life in the individual soul, would introduce "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." In this He was not wrong. Experience has approved His wisdom. He leads the teachers of the world, because He has presented the one truth which can regenerate society. "Suited alike," says Dr. Geikie,\* "for the peasant and the

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\* "Life of Christ."

prince, it cared nothing for outward position, or the changes of states or nationality, but sought only to meet the wants and longings of man, in the inner infinite world of the heart and spirit which no Herod could reach. Recognizing all good wherever found, it gladly drew to itself all that was true and pure, and rejoiced to ally itself with the gifts which dignify human nature. The friend of man, it saw in every soul a pearl, hidden or visible, and ennobled every honorable human calling by enlisting it in the service of God. . . . The sweet fancy of the Portuguese mariner, who, after rounding Cape Horn amidst storm and terrors, found that the ocean on which he had entered lay as if hushed asleep before him, and ascribed its calm to the glittering form of the Southern Cross shining down on it, was to be turned into fact, in the stillness of the hitherto troubled soul under the light of the Star of Bethlehem."

It will not be amiss to exhibit briefly the splendid possibilities which attend this idea of Jesus Christ. Consider, then, how amply it meets every requirement of personal salvation. Sin has separated the soul from God. The soul is lost in view of this separation. For without God no soul can realize the blessedness of the eternal Home. Heaven is a locality and also a state. Unless the state harmonizes with the locality, there can be no joy in Heaven. An unreconciled sinner in Heaven would be more out of



place than a pardoned saint in Hell ; for the saint in Hell might find some ministry of relief to engage his sympathies ; but the sinner in Heaven would know not what to do. It is worse than folly for any one to cherish the hope that he will somehow find a place in Heaven, if he continues to neglect God while here upon the earth. We must be in the heavenly state, if we expect to enjoy the heavenly locality. When we accept God's gracious invitation, we repent of sin and receive His pardon. Then we become united to Him by faith and love ; as truly and vitally united as the branch is united to the vine, or the body to the head. This is what Jesus said : " If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is the beginning of Christian life. Observe its pure spirituality. It is not dependent upon officiating priest, nor upon sacramental grace, nor upon places, orders, nor seasons. The life begins in each soul whenever and wherever God is made welcome. The relation is personal. Each for himself must become united to God. As we sit here in the sanctuary we are divided in view of this relation. Some of us have accepted God, and some have not. While we continue here we may quietly yield to God and rejoice in His salvation, and may carry hence, as we go out, a new hope. No father can do this great work for his child ; no husband can make

his wife receive God ; no friend can repent and believe for his friend. Each for himself. Just as we must die alone, so must we enter into this divine life alone. Then the progress of the Christian life announces its order in the teaching, which says : “ He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” Christian fruitfulness appears in the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit—the “ love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ” of a godly life. Here we find the best preparation for the service of earth and the glory of Heaven. He who is the best Christian will be the best citizen. Social life demands the activity of the laws which Christianity proclaims. When men are under the control of these laws they will be personally righteous, and their intercourse will be the beautiful expression of the power of a divine life. I do not believe that we shall witness the loathsome degradation of intemperance when men are united to God, nor do I expect then to hear the plaintive cry of the slave ; I do not believe that the weak will be neglected when men are united to God, nor do I expect then to hear of wars and rumors of wars ; I do not believe that the class distinctions, which seem like great chasms in our civilization, will be apparent when men are united to God, nor do I expect then to hear the indifference of prosperity and the curses of adversity from the sides of this chasm. My faith is strong that

the idea of Jesus Christ is adequate to this work. That idea has already asserted itself, and the brightest pages of history are covered with the records of its accomplishments. We need more faith. I am ashamed, as I observe the weakness of our faith—the weakness which resorts to so many human devices to assist the omnipotence of the Gospel. This Gospel is a vigorous Samson, without any of the folly of Manoah's son. But what could the vigorous Samson have done, if timid Israelites had bandaged his limbs for safety, had put a crutch under his arm to help him walk, and had loaded him with a giant's armor to increase his efficiency? No! no! we err sadly when we do not trust the Gospel! Jesus Christ trusted it. Are we wiser and better than was He? I should be glad to witness a crusade against oppression and iniquity which would be conducted on His plan, with His idea. It may be well to advocate temperance, but there is a more fundamental advocacy, and that is union with God; it may be well to denounce slavery, but slavery is doomed if union with God becomes a reality; it may be well to insist upon honesty, but every virtue and every grace will bloom if union with God becomes the seed of a new life. Christianity is positive morality. It dismisses the chill and barrenness of winter by introducing the warmth and verdure of spring.

To this far-reaching idea Jesus Christ gave His

life. He was one of the few teachers who have announced seed truths; *i. e.*, truths which open and germinate and bear fruit through the centuries. His truth has this characteristic: it is the most sublime, the most comprehensive, the most practical of all known truths. Two worlds are considered by it. Two conditions wait upon its instruction. It meets us here in sin and misery, and it establishes us there in holiness and felicity; it contemplates a millennium of peace upon the earth and endless ages of loving service in Heaven. Compared with it, what shall be said of the destructive godlessness which fills the atmosphere with fire and smoke; or the placid agnosticism which confesses inability to believe in God, angel, or spirit; or the prevalent worldliness which burns the candle of opportunity to the socket and dies in darkness? With Christ's idea how shall we compare these many ideas which are current in review or on platform? They are negations, His idea is a clear statement; they condemn us to hopelessness, His idea encourages effort; they debase our spirituality, His idea is instinct with glory and honor and immortality. We may safely teach His teaching to our children; we may safely go upon the street with it and make it known to the multitude; we may safely cherish it for our dark and lonely days. Union with God! It is the polar star whose mild light conducts the mariner over life's troubled sea.

3d. In His teaching, Jesus Christ made Himself prominent by soliciting a love whose significance is appreciated in this personal union with God. This is one of the most remarkable features of His teaching. He did not carry the dignity of great age, for He was a young man when He completed His work. He did not enjoy the approval of the great Rabbis, like Gamaliel, for He was rejected by the principal men of the Jews. Yet with His youth and His humble station in life, He ventured to call His hearers to Himself, and to assure them that they would become united to God by believing on Him. What would have been thought of Socrates if he had concluded his addresses to the young men of Athens, by saying constantly: "Believe on *me*. Accept *me*. Love *me*. He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father!" Yet this is precisely what Jesus of Nazareth said, and the call from His lips seems quite appropriate. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto *me*." There is here a prominence of self, and yet He was the most unselfish of all beings. His self, so beautiful, so attractive, so refreshing in its response to penitence and love, is magnetic. We feel its solicitations. It is the persuasiveness of the sun's rays which lifts the limpid water-drops from stagnant pool and bog. We yield to His appeal, and behold we are united to God. "Bertrand," said Bonaparte \*

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\* "Conversations at St. Helena."

to the favorite officer, who was the companion of his exile, "what a proof of the divinity of Christ! With an empire so absolute, He has but one single end—the spiritual amelioration of individuals, the purity of the conscience, the union to that which is true, the holiness of the soul. Christ speaks, and at once generations become His by stricter, closer ties than those of blood—by the most sacred, the most indissoluble of unions. He lights up the flames of a love which prevails over every other love. The founders of other religions never conceived of this mystical love, which is the essence of Christianity, and is beautifully called charity." Then, for a moment, the emperor was silent. Soon he resumed the conversation and said: "Bertrand, if you do not perceive that Jesus Christ is God, then I did wrong in making you a general."

The wisdom of this method which Jesus Christ adopted has been generally commended. His idea—union with God—was too abstract for popular appreciation. "Men need a leader, an example, a person, to whom they can look as a centre of attraction." He meets that need. He secures a personal love. Then He opens to the experience of His disciple the hidden depths of that love which contain this precious union with God. It is with His love somewhat as it is with the sacred love of marriage, whose significance can not be known at the bridal, but



which finds its interpretation through years of mutual helpfulness, sympathy, and service. So is it with the love of Jesus, of which we hear so much. Beginning with the simplicity of a child's faith, it advances to the maturity of an affection like that which Paul commended when he said that it "passeth knowledge." He solicits our love in order that He may unite us to God. He is near and visible. We can behold Him and hear Him speak. It is not difficult to accept His outstretched hand. Then He leads us to a consciousness of God which becomes the strength and comfort and joy of our souls.

There will be little or no dispute that Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher of the world. He has spoken the wisest and best word on the important questions of life and destiny. Whatever mysteries may confront us—and I need not to be reminded of the mysteries, they announce themselves—we may feel sure that the man who conforms his faith and conduct to the teaching of Jesus Christ will be prepared to meet any event of the future beyond the grave. If there is no future, as some tell us, then he will lose nothing, for he will never be conscious of the disappointment to his hopes, and he will have the satisfaction of leading a sober, righteous, and godly life while he is with his fellow-men. But if there is a future, as the Word of God declares and our own consciousness affirms, then he will gain everything. For the

welcome, the crown, and the mansion are promised unto those who have confessed Jesus Christ in the experiences of their earthly lives.

Therefore there is real joy in learning of Him—joy in hearing Him say, “Thy sins be forgiven thee; go in peace”; joy in welcoming the love which He offers so freely to every trusting disciple; joy in realizing that God is a Father who pities them that fear Him; joy in knowing that sin is to be outgrown and that holiness is to be the abiding life; joy in listening to the gentle whispers of the Holy Spirit; joy in experiencing the grace which brings chastisement out of trial; joy in the hope that strife and confusion, jealousy and division will not always desolate the earth; joy in the fair prospect of a celestial residence, whose walls are sometimes visible, whose seraphic anthems are sometimes heard, whose employments are pure and sweet and blessed, and whose radiance, effulgent day and night, is the glory of God and of the Lamb.

### XIII.

## THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.—WHAT DID HE DO?

*“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?*

*“And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:*

*“And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him.*

*“But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.*

*“Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;*

*“And when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.*

*“And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but Him they saw not.”—*

LUKE xxiv. 18-24.

THE work of Jesus Christ is very completely outlined in the reply of Cleopas. For three years that work has interested the people of Judea and Galilee.

It has just culminated in the strange death upon the cross, and in the stranger rumors of the resurrection. Public sentiment is divided. The essential features of the work can not be denied, and yet there are many explanations of its significance which are mentioned with approval.

Cleopas and his friend are disciples of Jesus Christ. They have just left Jerusalem, where they have become familiar with the events of the last few days. On the way to Emmaus, they naturally talk together of all these things which have happened. They can not understand them. With intense admiration and devotion they have accepted Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of Israel. His teaching has commended itself to their intelligence, and His actions have seemed to be expressive of unlimited power. Yet in the crisis of His career, in the hour when His triumphal entry into the Holy City has been celebrated, He has tamely surrendered Himself to a band of soldiers, and has been crucified. They are perplexed. No one stands ready to explain the apparent contradiction. For what shall be said of the Redeemer of Israel, who, having exhibited resources adequate to the deliverances of the Chosen People from the Roman yoke, has expired upon a cross?

In their distress, these friends meet a stranger, who asks the reason of their sadness. The reply of Cleopas presents the general estimate of the Master's

work which obtains among His disciples; for he promptly answers that they are troubled concerning Jesus of Nazareth, whom they have recognized as a prophet, and as a revelation of God, whom they have followed to Golgotha, and who is said to have arisen from the grave. Within these four particulars the entire work is comprehended. Cleopas is intelligent. We shall not go astray if we accept him as our guide and institute our inquiries in the directions thus indicated.

1st. Jesus Christ discharged the duties of a prophet. The great law-giver, Moses, predicted this activity when he said to the Hebrews: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." In his address to the people of Jerusalem, who were assembled in the porch that is called Solomon's, Peter insisted that this prediction had met its fulfilment in the work of Jesus Christ. As Cleopas remarked, He was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and the people." In His work, the prophetic order, which had received such honor from the labors of many illustrious men, reached its culmination. The long line of prophets, extending from Moses to John the Baptist, found a leader in Jesus Christ. They all anticipated His coming. Without His work they could not exhibit the wisdom nor the truthfulness of their messages.

He was essential to them, as they were preparatory to Him. They were the shadows, and He was the substance ; He was the gold, and they were the drafts upon the treasury ; they were the types, and He was the antitype.

The duties of a prophet were threefold. He was a narrator, as when he made known, in his own way, facts that were familiar ; he was also an expounder, as when he interpreted events ; he was, moreover, a seer, as when he looked into the future and announced its mysteries. The pen of the historian was in the hand of Moses, for he wrote the history of the Exodus, which occurred under his leadership. He frequently explained to the Hebrews the truths which God revealed, and thus he was a preacher of righteousness. Besides, he had visions, and was acquainted with God's purposes, so that he was able to make predictions. Thus he met all the duties of a prophet. In like manner Jesus Christ accomplished His great work. Very frequently He referred to the history of the past. With simple narratives He interested the common people in the records of the Old Testament Scriptures, bearing thus His testimony to their divine origin. For it is generally agreed among scholars, that when He made mention of the Scriptures, He held in His hand the books which we now possess as our Old Testament. These books were revered as the Word of God. Their contents



were carefully studied. The thought of Christendom gives to the entire Bible—the Old and the New Testaments—no more respect than the Hebrews gave to the Old Testament alone. What, then, shall be said of the attitude of Jesus Christ toward these venerated writings? Did He indorse that veneration? Did He ever play fast and loose with the statements of these ancient books? Did He refuse to make use of the more difficult portions, such as the story of Jonah, or the incident of Lot's wife? Did He explain such references and statements, which were generally accepted as historical, by reducing them to myths, legends, fables, or allegories? No; He was sincere. There was no duplicity in His nature. He was just as honest in His indorsement of the Old Testament as a Christian minister is supposed to be in his indorsement of the entire Bible. When you enter a Christian sanctuary, and are urged by a minister of religion to search the Scriptures, and are told that these Scriptures are God's Word, you can hardly fail to carry away the conviction that he who has been addressing you holds to the general Christian belief respecting the inspiration or divine authority of these books. If he does not, then you certainly must expect that he will say so; and if he does not, then you will naturally look to see him withdraw to some other fellowship, where he can speak his own views candidly, and without the restraints which honesty

imposes. For honesty does impose restraints, which make it impossible that one should use the advantages of the Christian sanctuary to destroy the faith of the Christian Church. When I find that critics, so free and bold as Matthew Arnold \* always is, agree with more conservative and learned scholars in recognizing our Old Testament as the Hebrew canon of the first century, I am confirmed in the opinion that I am reading now the sacred writings that Jesus Christ read; and when I observe his reverence, his acceptance of the general opinion as to their inspiration, I am satisfied, yes, and more than satisfied, to study them as the revelation of God.

The prophetic expositions of Jesus Christ brought to the surface the deep spiritual truths of the Old Testament. In this part of His work He did not announce new truths. It was His aim to expound, to enforce, to vitalize the truths which were concealed in the mines of the ancient revelation. Just as the miner digs into the hills to bring out the gold which may pass current as coin of the realm, so he labored to make effective the truths which men had passed by in ignorance, or perverted to the base uses of their traditional superstitions. God taught the Hebrews by means of object-lessons, and yet the object-lessons covered the great principles of redemption, which

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\* "God and the Bible."

hold good for all time. One may teach a class of children with beads and pictures the very same principles that a class of adults will learn in formal statements. Some of the children will grasp the principles and will then throw away the beads and pictures, while there will always be grown-up children who will be using beads and pictures without any reference to the principles. This was the case with Rabbinism when Jesus Christ appeared. He enunciated the principles of righteousness, and in so doing He delivered the people from the bondage of the traditional object-lessons. It is certainly strengthening to faith to find that the magnificent tree of New Testament instruction, whose branches brush the clouds, while they also touch the earth within reach of the weakest intelligence, strikes its roots into the soil of a venerable past; that God, who "at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

Then when we consider Jesus Christ as a seer, we discover that to His vision the entire future was open. He has outlined the world's history to the end of time, and has given suggestions of the life of the eternal ages. No predictions can equal His. Many generations of saints have rejoiced as they have entered into a realization of His promised blessedness. Every word of His that touches the earth

and the earthly life, has been approved by a wise and happy experience. So far as mankind have journeyed here in the flesh, so far His guide-book has met each requirement of the way. May we not trust it, therefore, in what it announces of the progress within the veil, in what it says about death and Heaven, in what it assures us of a welcome and an eternal home?

Thus the work of Jesus Christ was that of a prophet. "The common people heard Him gladly." He was greater than John the Baptist, who was greater than Isaiah, or even Moses. He magnified this office, already splendidly exalted. Truth flowed from His lips. The past, the present, and the future were of interest to Him. He spake as never man spake. His words of wisdom and of grace maintain their freshness and efficiency, and each new generation finds counsel and help in hearing Him.

2d. Jesus Christ commended Himself as a revelation of God. In all ages men have been eager to know God. Sometimes this eagerness has been the curiosity of philosophical speculation, and then again it has been the endeavor of the convicted soul. But it has always been witnessed. Religion—and religion has to do with man's conception of God—has a secure place in human life. Every race, every nation, every tribe on the globe has a religion. It was Plutarch\* who said that "If you will take the pains to

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\* "Morals."

travel through the world, you may find towns and cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without houses, without wealth, without money, without theatres and places of exercise ; but there never was seen, nor shall be seen by men, any city without temples and gods, or without making use of prayers, oaths, divinations, and sacrifices for the obtaining of blessings and benefits, and the averting of curses and calamities." "Canst thou by searching find out God?" asks Zophar, the Naamathite, of Job, whose lament is heard in the cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" As Paul passed through the streets of classic Athens, he observed an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown God"; and as we meet our fellow-men in the familiar intercourse of daily life, we read in their spiritual destitution their personal need of God. It was Thomas Erskine,\* of Linlathen—a man who breathed the purest spiritual atmosphere, and one whose life was in close fellowship with God—it was Thomas Erskine who met the shepherd on the Highland hills, and asked gently, "Do you know the Father?" and who in after-years on those same hills met the same shepherd and heard from him the greeting: "I know the Father now." From him we have the beautiful answer to the question: "What is the

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\* "History of Church of Scotland," Stanley.

effect of revelation to us?" "It is the disclosure to us of our true relations to God and to one another, as when an exile, after long years' absence, returns home and sees faces which he does not recognize. Then one in whom he can trust comes, and says, 'This aged man is your father; this boy is your brother, who has done much for you; this child is your son.'" "Show us," said Philip, as they sat with Jesus around the table of the Passover, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Then Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake."

This was His attitude. He claimed to be a revelation of God. Never do we find Him associating His disciples with Himself in these more intimate relations thus sustained. He could say, as no other being could: "I and the Father are one." He could pray to God as no one else could, and could refer to "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." He could speak as no one else has dared to speak, of



the characteristics of the divine nature, which make God approachable and bring Him very near to man.

We can hardly fail to mention the word which is inevitably associated with the statement of this sublime fact. We do not hesitate to announce our faith in a veritable incarnation, although we shall refuse to be driven to undertake an explanation of this supreme mystery. Jesus Christ was a revelation of God, because as the eternal Word He became flesh and dwelt among us. This was His claim. "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world ; again I leave the world and go to the Father." He can not be classified with mortals. He is above us, far, far above us. His life is radiant with a divine illumination. His presence is a testimony, which is as convincing as the greeting of the sun. He establishes His own claims. His personal character is the argument which His enemies can not meet. Either He was deceived, and His exalted wisdom and practical good sense forbid the supposition : or else He was a deceiver ; and this old reproach of the Jews has long since ceased to be heard ; or else He was sincere and intelligent ; and the verdict of criticism has written "perfect" above His name. If His was the perfect character, then we can not keep back the homage which belongs to Him as a revelation of God.

At once we are led to a recognition of what we are accustomed to call "the supernatural." Here is a

person who is human, and yet more than human : here is an interposition from the spiritual realm : here is the presence of God in the life of man. This should not startle us. A belief in God carries with it, of necessity, a belief in such a possibility. Who will dare to say that God can not become incarnate ?

It was to establish His claims before the people that Jesus Christ performed miracles. He presented Himself, and announced His claims, and then did many wonderful works. The miracles, be it remembered, are not to be separated from His life and teaching. He was not a miracle-worker, and nothing else ; nor was He pre-eminently a miracle-worker. His miracles were the confirmations of His claims. But there are many who object that the miracles, as reported, are the burdens of His claims. There is a general impression that the Gospel narratives are rather loaded than sustained by these accounts of miracles. Consequently the endeavor has been put forth to get rid of the miracles entirely by reducing these plain accounts to legends or myths, which had their birth in the imaginations of credulous disciples. As to this we may say that considerable time is required for the formation, or development, of legends or myths. They are growths from the seeds of truth. Every legend or myth covers some truth. Now we know that the Gospel narratives were in existence within a few years after the death of Jesus Christ. There was not time

enough between His death and the appearance of the Gospels for the formation of these miraculous stories. Then, too, the recital, as we find it, is easy and natural. The miracles are described just as ordinary events are. They have their appropriate places. There is no appearance of an endeavor to multiply them. They are dignified and commanding, never foolish and puerile. "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, "we know that Thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." In that sentence the place and value of miracles is very clearly stated. "A teacher come from God" presents himself. His character is approved. His teaching is acceptable. Now let him do some wonderful thing, let him still a tempest with a word of command, let him rebuke sickness, let him restore the dead. Is it unreasonable to ask him to do such things ; is it unreasonable to expect him to do them ; is it unreasonable to believe that he has done them ? Most certainly it is, if the whole case is prejudged by definitions of what is reasonable, and what is miraculous. For example, in a volume of essays quite recently published, I meet this statement : "Reason tells us that a miracle—understanding by a miracle a breach of the laws of nature—is impossible ; and that to think it possible is to dishonor God ; for the laws of nature are the laws of God, and to say that God violates the laws of nature is to say that He

violates His own nature." Now that is a strong statement in its conclusion if its premise is sound. But if the premise is unsound the conclusion is worthless; and the premise is the clause so artfully inserted, "understanding by a miracle a breach of the laws of nature." But that is just what many of us do not understand. A miracle is an unusual and extraordinary use of nature's laws. But until we are perfectly acquainted with those laws we have no right to say that the stilling of a tempest by the word of such a person as Jesus Christ is a breach of the laws of nature. We are constantly contending with nature's laws. Our mechanical devices are almost all intended to defy or subdue certain laws of nature. And shall we say that an intelligence like that of Jesus Christ may not work with these laws or even above them to accomplish desirable results? When we are able to antagonize force with force, and to exert our puny strength in so many ways, shall we refuse to believe that He, so glorious in His personality, did not give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead?

Accepting Jesus Christ as a revelation of God, how interesting His life-work appears! The knowledge which we all crave is presented to us. So far as we are able to appreciate Him we may now know God. He is as Jesus was: and Jesus was as He is. Purity, consideration, benignity, love, are the divine character-

istics in which we rejoice. The babes in the dear Master's arms are lessons which have brought comfort to many troubled hearts, as there has arisen anxiety concerning God's interest in children; the pardon which met the penitence of publican and harlot is still bringing hope to the wayward and dissolute; the encouraging presence in the sick-room has brightened many a weary hour of pain; the command which was exhibited over death and the grave is heard in every Christian cemetery, with its announcements of life and resurrection. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever." We know now that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Our hearts are open, our ears are attentive. God is, henceforth, our "exceeding joy."

3d. Jesus Christ died upon the cross as a ransom for sin. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." That life bore steadily on to the cross. Not more surely do the waters of Lake Erie press on to the Falls of Niagara than did the career of Jesus Christ advance to the crucifixion. He came to suffer, and to die. The 53d chapter of Isaiah was a prediction, which it was necessary for Him to fulfil. He lived always in the shadow of the cross. His life would have been incomplete, and His teaching would have been valueless, if both had not been crowned by death. The tragical event, which Jewish

wrath had contrived as the extinction of His influence, became its impulse. From that memorable hour on Calvary, when the "It is finished" of His dissolution was heard, His name has been sacred, His memory has been cherished, His truth has won respect and confidence, and His love has dominated every affection. Stricken, pale, bleeding, dead, He still possesses a magnetism, which draws to His cross penitence and sorrow, tenderness and sympathy, aspiration and hope. The crown of thorns is the symbol of universal authority, and the despised cross is the recognized throne of the King of Glory. A wonderful work, consummated by a shameful death! A spotless life, securing its triumph through crucifixion! A sublime teaching, finding its interpretation in agony and blood! Yet this we meet, as we consider the work of Jesus Christ. He lived to die, and in dying made His life illustrious forever.

But why? And the question presses. Why did He die? His death was not an accident; nor was it simply a martyr's death. It has a more profound significance. It was a ransom—"to give His life a ransom for many." He died to reconcile us to God. He was a sacrifice, but a voluntary sacrifice. He freely and cheerfully gave Himself on our behalf. The principle of substitution, so widely illustrated in the universe, found its culmination in His death. We may not represent this glorious sacrifice as a vio-



lent, compulsory wreaking of vengeance upon an innocent person. For Jesus Christ gave Himself to the death upon the cross in order that He might redeem sinners. His was the heroism of the mother who loves not her life unto the death, when she bends over the form of the plague-stricken child; or the heroism of the sailor who leaps into the sea to rescue a drowning comrade; or the heroism of the soldier who volunteers for duty in the forlorn hope. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." We may not hope to penetrate this mystery of mysteries, so as to understand it perfectly. We may say many things about it, but we can not say all. A complete theory of the atonement is as impossible as a complete theory of God's nature and attributes. We know that the death of Jesus Christ looks in a Godward direction, and meets the demands of God's moral government. We know also that it looks in a human direction, and secures penitence and faith through the activity of the Holy Spirit. We know still further that it influences the angels, as it exhibits to them the redemptive love of God. But no man can tell us how all this is. We can know the facts; it is very doubtful if we can know their philosophy.

Yet what a fact this is! Here is a race which is in need of divine assistance, and here is a Saviour who has died in the place of sinners. He shed His

blood on our behalf. He has endured the sufferings which we deserve. He offers us pardon and everlasting life upon the one condition of faith. Only believe, and all condemnation will be removed; only believe, and your name will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life; only believe, and the Holy Spirit will renew and sanctify you; only believe, and Jesus Christ will be your intercessor; only believe, and Heaven's joys will meet earth's expectations at the boundary line called death! Precious faith! Glorious hope! A vista opens before the pardoned sinner which brings to view the triumph of the Saints!

4th. Jesus Christ arose from the sepulchre. Tenderly they drew the nails from His hands and feet, gently they lowered His body from the cross, carefully they wrapped His form in the finest linen, and then, with bowed heads and aching hearts, the disciples carried the precious remains to the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea. Pilate had granted this permission, after he had learned from the Roman centurion that life was extinct. No one in Jerusalem believed that He was then alive, that He had merely swooned. The Scribes and the Chief Priests went home at sunset, with the satisfaction that they had disposed of a very troublesome person, and the disciples gathered in an upper room to talk of their common disappointment. A seal was placed upon the stone that secured the sepulchre, and a guard of

soldiers was stationed to watch. Thus the hours of the Sabbath dragged themselves wearily along, and the morning of the first day of the week appeared. Faithful women are at the city's gate before the rising of the sun, and when the gate is open they hasten to the sepulchre. There a surprise awaits them. The sepulchre is empty. An angelic voice is heard. Tidings of a resurrection are given. The greeting of the Master is soon received. They are thrilled with joy. Despair gives way to astonishment, and astonishment to faith, as "He showed Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." They believed that He had arisen. Their faith was commanding. Nothing could shake it. A new impulse was given to life; a new direction was given to endeavor. "Jesus and the resurrection" became the theme of the preaching which was presently heard in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the groves of pleasure-loving Antioch, on the streets of brilliant Corinth, in the splendid palaces of Rome, on the decks of Mediterranean corn-ships, by the camp-fires of the Danube, on the shores of distant Britain. The intellect of the ancient world was stimulated to its grandest efforts by the thoughts which were thus presented, and the heart of humanity felt the warmth of a sweet, balmy inspiration, as this divine presence was

recognized above the grave. Death conquered! The grave despoiled! Life and immortality brought to light! Every cheering, every comforting announcement presented! Every expectation, every hope made real! Belief quickened endeavor. The possibilities of the resurrection became the constraint of holiness. Men destroyed their idols and began to worship in the Spirit. Lust was crucified, in order that the new life of purity might arise from this death to sin. Brotherhood was cultivated in view of a common relation to God in Christ. Sympathy was pronounced to the sorrowing, and the pencil of resignation covered the walls of the catacombs with the hopeful confidences which made martyrdom a splendid triumph.

Such—in our imperfect representation—was the work of Jesus Christ. He accomplished His work, “and then a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Shall we, my friends, despise this work? God forbid! In so doing, we would utter our own folly; we would discover our own shame; we would declare our own condemnation. Shall we then trifle with it? The interest is too serious. It concerns us vitally. Shall we neglect it? One may starve in a land of plenty, and perish with hunger while he has in his hand an invitation to a banquet. Shall we accept it? Then will there come to us the sweet consciousness of its excellence, as we find our estimate of His work by

using the fruits thereof, by enjoying the grace which He presents. "Oh, taste, and see that the Lord is good." Come in humility and accept the work of Jesus Christ; make Him your prophet, for He can teach you; make Him your priest, for He can atone and intercede for you; make Him your king, for He can rule, protect, and enrich you. Thus through His work, you may leave the old and wretched life of sin and enter into the life of holiness, which has the promise of endless years. For "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

## XIV.

### THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

*"What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"*

—MATT. xxii. 42.

WHO is Jesus Christ? There can be no doubt that He once lived in Judea and Galilee. Many of His discourses have been preserved, and the universal testimony of good and wise men is, that they contain the truths which are essential to the formation of character. His work has also commanded attention. Its significance has been carefully examined, and its influence has been traced into a great variety of individual and national experiences. History has assigned Jesus Christ the first place among the leaders of thought whose activity has made them the benefactors of the race. His fame is secure. Time can only add to the homage which He has already received. The Gospel faces the future with the freshness and promise of youth. When its consummation has been realized then will be known the importance of His mission, who "brought life and immortality to light."

But who is He? The old question presents itself



for an answer to every inquiring, anxious soul. Conscious of need, deeply conscious of sin and the condemnation of sin, the soul is directed to Jesus Christ. His presence is a reality. The tones of His voice reach the ear with comfort, and the assurances of His work arouse hope. He speaks of pardon, and He certainly lives and dies with reference to sin. Yet all this may be of the past. Inspired men have lived, and then have disappeared entirely. Miracles have been performed, and the miracle-workers have gone the way of all the earth. Must He—great as a prophet, great as a worker of miracles—be associated with Moses and Isaiah, Elijah and Elisha? If so, He can not be a present Saviour, “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

Many years ago an honored teacher\* remarked in my hearing that there can be but four answers to the question, who is Christ? Either He is only man, or else He is only God, or He is neither, or He is both. Each of these four answers has been up for consideration, and upon each one of them the formal judgment of Christendom has been pronounced. Our task, therefore, will be quite simple, as we pursue our inquiry along a beaten path.

1st. Jesus Christ is man. His human nature is perfect. Human nature in its perfection has the

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\* Prof. R. D. Hitchcock.

elements which are found in the male and the female characters. These two related and complementary characters form human nature. "Our common humanity was created male and female." "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." The careful statement of the Book of Genesis, a statement which has the precision of scientific language, should be remembered in the consideration of the manhood of Jesus Christ. His manhood was a complete humanity. The strength and vigor of the male and the gentleness and beauty of the female, were illustrated by His life and conduct. He was stern and uncompromising in the presence of sin, and He was tender and sympathetic whenever He encountered sorrow; His terrific denunciations of the Pharisees were mingled with His lamentations over the fate of Jerusalem; His heroic advance to the agony of Golgotha was associated with His appeal to the disciples to watch with Him in Gethsemane. Manly force and womanly compassion met in Him. As His humanity was superior to all racial distinctions, so that He is adapted to every continent and every age, it also touched life at every point of the complete social circle. He may not be separated from any experience. No child may say that the

man of Nazareth has nothing in common with childhood, because humanity embraces every interest of a child, and He was human. A woman may not say that the Son of Man can not present to her an ideal, because humanity includes every interest of a woman, and He was human. Robertson performed a great service when he announced this Scriptural truth as the best defence against the errors of Mariolatry.\* “Think of Christ only as the masculine character glorified by the union of Godhead with it, and your Christianity has in it an awful gap, a void, a want, the inevitable supply and relief to which will be Mariolatry, however secure you may think yourself, however strong and fierce the language you now use. Men who have used language as strong and fierce have become idolaters of Mary. With a half-thought of Christ, safe you are not. But think of Him as the divine-human being in whom both sides of our double being are divine and glorified, and then you have the truth which Romanism has marred and perverted into an idolatry pernicious in all; in the less spiritual worshippers, sensualizing and debasing.”

That Jesus Christ was man was the general opinion of His disciples and of the early Church. The disciples clasped His hand, and heard His voice, and caught the pleasant greeting of His eye. With Him

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\* Sermons, Vol. II., “The Glory of the Divine Son.”

they shared their food. They observed that He was hungry and thirsty and weary and faint. From infancy He had developed naturally into childhood, and from childhood into mature life. "Jesus," as the evangelist has said, "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." He was tempted. He suffered. He prayed for help in times of sore distress. He felt the pains of crucifixion. His blood flowed from wounded hands and feet and side. He met death, and came under the power of death. The New Testament writers all agree with the Apostle John, who expresses his mature convictions in such forcible words as these: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life."

The importance of a correct estimate of the humanity of Jesus Christ can not fail to impress the mind. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." If His humanity was only a seeming, a pretence, as certain members of the Church of the second and third centuries declared, then He can not be a Mediator. For the Mediator between God and men is the man Christ Jesus. He comes very near to us, and is thus approachable. He illustrates the glorious possibilities of our humanity, and is thus an example to us all.

He magnifies the law by His perfect obedience. He gives up His life as a ransom in order that we may be delivered from the bondage of sin. Whatever else He may be, Jesus Christ is man. Thank God! we have a glorious ideal! There is a Jewish proverb which says that "the secret of man is the secret of the Messiah." "To know ourselves," remarks Prof. H. B. Smith,\* "we must know Christ, and to know Christ is to know ourselves. Just as one born a poet does not know the full stores of his own imagination until he has read Homer, Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare; just as the sculptor does not know his gift in art until he has gazed entranced upon the matchless products of Greek and Roman statuary; just as the young painter, when standing before the breathing canvas that revealed to him all the power of the pencil, cried out in wonder, 'I too am a painter': so the human soul may gaze on all other forms, linger on all other impersonations of thought and feeling, and explore all art and science, but, until it stands face to face with the Lord of the race, the Saviour of the lost, it can not feel all the height, and depth of human woe and of human love, all the soul's boundless capacities, its supreme destiny." Therefore we rejoice in this acquaintance with the Son of Man. His earthly life meets us so cordially in our

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\* "System of Theology," p. 384.

despair. We are encouraged by it to such heroic endeavors. It answers so many questions. It announces so many prophecies. "As for me," and the Psalmist was weary and sad, when he took his harp and raised his plaintive song, which bore him on the wings of hope, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness"; and John, with clearer, riper knowledge, comforted himself, cheered his old age at Ephesus, and brightened the faith of each new Christian generation by recording his belief that we are now the sons of God, and that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. "Like Him" in the perfection of our humanity, "like him" in the radiant glory which humanity secured when He triumphed!

2d. Jesus Christ is God. Familiarity with this statement should not be permitted to weaken its force. It is certainly a wonderful statement. The perfect humanity of Jesus Christ exalts Him far above all other human beings who are affected by the degrading influences of sin. But His divinity places Him upon the throne of God. Can we make such a statement? Are we justified in assigning the Son of Mary to such a sublime position in the universe? May we look up to Him with adoring reverence and love, even while we sympathize with His sorrows and grieve over the misery of His earthly life?



The verdict of Christendom has been in favor of the complete divinity of Jesus Christ. This is an important fact which should have great weight with the present generation of inquirers. The probabilities are in favor of a verdict which has commanded the assent of Christendom, by entering into the great creeds, by stimulating the successful missionary activity, by becoming the theme of devotional literature. The creeds of Christendom, Roman, Greek, Protestant, agree in their recognition of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The heroic missionaries, like Paul, Columba, Xavier, Brainerd, Livingstone, Patteson, have carried this faith in their hearts, and have felt the warm impulses of its constraining love amid the hardships and persecutions of their devoted service. The devotional literature of the church, which is the life-blood of theology, has exhibited this dependence upon one who may be regarded as

“The Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour divine.”

Christendom has been a patient student of the Bible. Keen and discriminating intellects have searched the Scriptures. The antagonisms of unbelief have assailed and must destroy every weak and indefensible position. The Council of Nicæa in the fourth century was a veritable Waterloo. When Athanasius, the young deacon of Alexandria, held the line of battle on be-

half of "the faith once delivered to the saints," the forces of Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, were repulsed and driven from the field. "The creed of Arius was torn up, and the fragments strewn upon the floor of the council-chamber; and with but two dissenting voices their own creed was given to the world." This creed, with modifications in its forms of statement, but without any change in its essential truths, has since commanded a cordial assent. We respect it now. Our advance is with the column which has enrolled the martyrs, the confessors, the missionaries, and that multitude which no man can number, whose robes have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Led thus into the presence of the Apostles and Evangelists, we find that their writings justify the interpretation which they have received. We have their writings, and are competent to judge for ourselves. In these writings they constantly refer to Jesus Christ as to one who existed with the Father before He appeared upon the earth. "God sent forth His Son." "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." "Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." "All things were made by Him." Then, moreover, to Him they freely apply divine titles, as when John says, "This is the true God and eternal life"; or when Paul says,

“Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever”; or when Thomas, the doubter, is brought to the confession, “My Lord and my God”; or when Peter says, “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord”; or when Jude speaks of the condemnation which rests upon certain who persist in denying “our Lord Jesus Christ.” These godly men, who are contending so earnestly with superstition and idolatry, do not hesitate to present Jesus Christ as the object of worship. Thus Paul declares his belief that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Luke says that “the disciples worshipped Him.” The prayer of the dying Stephen is a direct appeal for His assistance: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” John, in the visions of the Apocalypse, sees something of the worship of Heaven, and recognizes Jesus Christ as the recipient of thanksgiving and praise, and glory and honor.

We are permitted to pass from the presence of the Apostles and Evangelists into the presence of our Lord himself. We may question Him. His claims may be considered. He speaks of Himself without reserve. For example, when He addresses the learned men of the Jews He says: “I and the Father are one.” Instantly a charge of blasphemy is heard. With one consent the Jews condemn Him, saying in

their accusation: "Thou being a man, makest thyself God." Does He deny the justness of their charge? Does He retract or alter His statement? Not in the least. On the contrary, He repeats it; and with such emphasis that He is obliged to flee in order to escape their violence. Then when He is arrested and brought as a prisoner before the Sanhedrin, what is His attitude? Is He disconcerted? Does He appear at all like a fanatic or a deceiver? Is He hesitant? There is an awful stillness as the High-Priest arises and calls upon Him to speak decisively and honestly. "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" The words are well chosen. They admit of a positive denial, or as positive an affirmation. Which shall it be? Life is sweet. Deception has never marred the speech of Jesus. What will He answer? Will He prove true to His record? In this supreme moment will He establish or destroy the beautiful fabric which He has built to shelter the needy souls of men? We may trust Him. His courage does not fail. Calmly He answers: "Thou hast said. Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." Can you ask for more? Would you have Him state His divinity more clearly? Can you hope to brush away His claims, or to read any other meaning into His words? "The High-Priest rent his clothes,

saying, He hath spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? behold now ye have heard His blasphemy: what think ye? They answered, and said, He is guilty of death." Then as they led Him to Pilate, the Roman governor, they had but one ground of complaint to urge against Him, saying, in their wrath: "He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." But with Pilate He was silent. He accepted the judgment of their complaint. The charge was true. He could not and He would not deny it. For this He submitted to the scourging, to the persecution, to the cross, and to the shame of a culprit's death.

The value of this testimony, which Jesus Christ gave concerning Himself, will be greatly affected by our estimate of His character as man. If His character awaits this testimony as a princely life awaits a coronation, then we must be confirmed in the belief that He is, indeed, the Son of God. And such, my friends, is the case. The testimony of Jesus Christ is sustained by His own self-consciousness. That self-consciousness itself is an argument, positive, clear, and convincing. Who has ever searched the hidden depths of the human heart as He has? Who has ever urged repentance for the least sins as He has? Who has ever rebuked hypocrisy as He has? And yet, discover, if you can, the first evidence in His speech of a consciousness of personal guilt; find, if

you can, a single instance which will warrant the remark that He felt the necessity of repentance. Then observe the dignified composure of His humility, which utters itself in the frequent “*I say unto you,*” and which never associates the disciples with Himself on the plane of their common relation to the Father—“*My Father*” often, “*your Father*” often, “*our Father*” never. For the prayer which He gave as the model of all prayer, was for the use of the disciples and not for His own use. Advance to a consideration of His announcements concerning His work and invitations, concerning His wisdom and power. Hear Him as He pronounces authoritatively the forgiveness of sins; contemplate the day of judgment, and remember that He has said that He is to occupy the throne. Read the history of Christianity, and find its outlines in the predictions which fell from His lips. This argument, elaborated carefully in an essay by Professor Van Oosterzee, of Utrecht,\* can not be answered in the light of history. The personal consciousness of Jesus leads as directly to His divinity as the soft touch of a gentle hand, the friendly ministry of compassionate interest, the holy solicitude of earnest endeavor do to a heart which is sanctified by grace. “That this wonderful image of Christ depicted in the Gospels”—I quote from the

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\* *Princeton Review*, July, 1878.



essay just mentioned—"should have been invented by men so very far inferior to the ideal they shaped, is psychologically absurd and altogether unimaginable. He who degrades the Lord—for so in fact we ought to call it—who degrades Him into being a once crucified Jew, living now merely in the grateful recollection of mankind and in probable immortality, like any other deceased martyr—he debases not merely Christ's whole manifestation, but the whole history of the Christian Church in its birth and growth to an obvious absurdity. To such an absurdity, I, for my part, prefer a mystery, which as mystery, even when revealed, can never be fully explained. I prefer this not only in the name and for the sake of faith, but quite as much in the name and for the sake of sound, reasonable common sense and of true and trustworthy science."

These claims of Jesus Christ were securely buttressed, as we know, by His miracles, especially by the miracle of His resurrection. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The miracles did not stand alone, nor did His life stand alone. The miracles and the life were intimately associated. The life announced the miracles, and the miracles were the natural expressions of the life. When the life is carefully studied, the miracles do not seem strange; and when the miracles are con-

sidered, they are seen to be in harmony with the life. Very early in His public ministry, Jesus gave the promise of His resurrection; and from that hour, until the morning of the first day of the week, which witnessed His triumph over the grave, His life was as much in preparation for that supreme event as the silent winter-work of nature, in buried root, in tender sapling, or in spreading oak, is in preparation for the efflorescence of the spring. The life without the resurrection would have been incomplete—a failure, indeed. But with that glorious fact to consummate it, it appears in the finished beauty of absolute perfection.

Thus His divinity is established in Christian thought—Jesus Christ is God. Infinitely exalted, He receives the adoring worship of saints and angels. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. He has a right to command. He is able to promise. No word of His will ever fail. No trusting soul, looking to Him for help and salvation, will find that He can not or that He will not grant the blessing of eternal life.

3d. Jesus Christ is both God and man. “They shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.” He stands by Himself. There is no other being like Him in the universe. We have found that He is man; we have found, also, that He is God. We must conclude, therefore, that

He is the God-man. And this conclusion need not startle us. It is mysterious, but only more mysterious because less familiar than the union of soul and body, which constitutes a human being. We know that a human being has a physical, a fleshly organization; and we know, also, that he has an immaterial, a spiritual organization. Through the union of the two, human life discovers its capabilities. The physical organization can not think and love and choose, nor can the spiritual organization hunger and thirst and faint and die. But when both are united, the human life, thus resulting, may suffer and enjoy, may work and play, may serve God and honor His holy name. This distinction has always been recognized, and the possibilities of this union determine the methods of education. Socrates replied to his friends, who warned him of the threats of his enemies: "They may kill me, if they can catch me." He did not mean that he would seek safety in ordinary flight, but that he—the spiritual organization—was beyond the reach of his persecutors. In like manner, Jesus encouraged His disciples by saying: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

"Why then should it be thought a thing incredible with you," that God should become incarnate? Humanity needs an incarnation. Our race is crushed and ruined by sin. In God alone is our help. Why

should He not bring help? He made us for Himself, and we have rebelled against Him. Is there any reason why He should not endeavor to restore us? Does God dishonor Himself when He considers our needs? Have the promptings of love no response in His pure nature? May we not accept Him, if He draws near to us in the person of Jesus Christ? I search in vain for a reason why the incarnation may not be accepted, if it is adequately sustained by evidence. I propose no philosophy of this great mystery, just as I am satisfied to live without a philosophy of the union of a true body and a reasonable soul in every human being. I can trust and love my friends without being an anatomist, or a metaphysician. Philosophy is not an essential of faith. Faith rests upon evidence; and philosophy seeks to know the causes, or reasons, or methods of things which do appear. We may believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is God and man, and may find that He is a perfect Saviour; and yet, we may not be able to answer one of a thousand questions, which may be asked concerning Him. For as the God-man, Jesus Christ, meets us on the level of common life, and conducts us to God, the Father; He speaks confidently of the divine purposes, because He came forth from God, and represents our interests at the Court of Heaven, where He is our Advocate; He sheds His blood as the propitiation for the sins of the

whole world, and His sacrifice is infinitely meritorious in view of His divinity; He becomes the first-fruits of them that sleep in death, the wave-sheaf of an abundant harvest of resurrection triumphs; He is the last Adam, the life-giving spirit of a redeemed race, which is to bear the image of the heavenly; He is the supreme Judge, to whom every record must be submitted, and who is to pronounce the final sentence upon every soul; He is the king with many crowns, whose praise shall never cease, whose authority will ultimately secure complete recognition, whose benediction is the joy of the Lord.

Consequently there is no invitation like that which He presents to the weary, sin-laden soul: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." For the invitation is charged with divine energy, as well as with human sympathy; and it pledges a rest, which can never, never disappoint. In that invitation, God speaks. The promise can be made effective. Oh! how often has it opened to yield its treasures of blessedness! *Then* there is the assurance of His constant presence, which the divinity makes real. "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is a pretty sentiment, but nothing more, unless Jesus Christ is divine. The Hebrew viceroy of Egypt gathered his kinsmen about his bed, as he was dying, and said to them: "I die, and God will surely visit you." He used no such language as the Saviour did;

and yet he was a man of pre-eminent distinction. Jesus, however, with few attendants, with no extended reputation, pronounced in favor of His own universal presence, a presence which time can not affect, and distance can not render impossible; a presence, which lighted the apostolic age and which is the cheering reality of this modern age. "I am with you alway." A glad announcement to cheer the lonely Christian here, as he maintains his hopeless defence against the savage Arabs of the Soudan, and a sweet welcome to greet him, as his devoted spirit is set free from the body and enters into the eternal home. "I am with you alway." A precious assurance, which becomes the companion of stormy ocean voyages, when the sea is tempestuous and death rides upon the waves. "I am with you alway." A soft pillow, on which the head may rest and find repose, when fever and pain awaken every distressing sensation of the nerves! "I am with you alway." A constant reproduction of the scenes in Capernaum, where His teaching met so cordial a reception; of the scenes in Bethany, where His visits were eagerly anticipated and as eagerly enjoyed; of the scenes in Jerusalem, where He gave to worship a definite and spiritual significance; of the scenes in the Garden and around the cross, where He endured His agony and surrendered His life. Jesus Christ is He who liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore.



Do we need a Saviour? And why? Have we sins to be forgiven? Are we conscious of an estrangement from God? Do we look for glory, honor, and immortality? The Saviour is here. Jesus Christ is the Saviour. In every particular, He meets the requirements of salvation. Shall we accept Him? If so, we shall quickly know that there is joy and peace in believing.

Do we need a friend—a friend who will never die, a friend who will never leave us, a friend upon whom we may rest our anxious hearts in every time of trouble? Jesus Christ is such a friend. He meets the children in their infancy; and the old men find that He is with them even to the end of life. Quick to respond, generous in His adaptation, cordial in sympathy, Jesus Christ has ever commended His friendship.

Do we need an intercessor? Are we sometimes conscious that death leads on to judgment? Can we plead for ourselves? Have we any merits which God will approve? Jesus Christ is an intercessor. Our humanity, glorified, indeed, but still marked with the imprints of the crucifixion, is an eloquent appeal, and His perfect divinity, recognized by all in Heaven, is an irresistible advocacy.

Am I wrong in commending to you Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of man? Will you err if you welcome Him and make His salvation your con-

fidence? No! Customs change. States and nations decline and fall. The tides of life ebb and flow. But the blessed sun which shone upon the patriarchs still shines upon our paths, and the pale moon brings her welcome night by night. The old is ever new. Those things that can not be shaken must remain. Above the strife of tongues, above the angry war of words, above the mists of speculation, above the gloomy fogs of infidelity, Jesus Christ, the Saviour, maintains His calm dignity. He is gracious still. With outstretched hands, He addresses human need. To weariness, to weakness, to anxiety, to despair, He says "come." And behold in coming, one and all find peace.

## XV.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

*“ But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.”*

—JOHN XX. 31.

IT was toward the close of the first century that John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” undertook to record his impressions of the Master’s life and work. He was then an aged man. For many years he had been a witness of the progress of the Gospel, as the new faith had marched out through the gates of Jerusalem to establish a residence in Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. Evangelists and apostles had left to the churches numerous writings, which presented interesting facts and explained important doctrines. These writings were preserved with unusual care. A reverence like that which guarded the Hebrew Scriptures was paid to them. In the public worship of each Lord’s day they were read and expounded ; and in the more familiar worship of the Christian household their contents were considered by parents and children. John had observed their influence. His home was at Ephesus. “The care of all the churches” occupied

his time. He was the survivor of the intimate companions of Jesus Christ. No one else remained. His memory was stored with precious incidents, which should not be allowed to pass away with his departure. He could speak. Why should he not write? In writing, however, what should he select? What method or aim should govern him? He looked out upon the churches, and recognized the needs of Christians. To what particular need should he address himself? The antagonism of Judaism and of heathenism was intensely bitter. How should he prepare the best defence against it? There were many desperate endeavors to undermine the faith. In what way could he hope to strengthen his brethren in the Lord?

With a wisdom which commends itself to every age, John undertook to confirm faith rather than to assail error. He knew that the confirmation of faith is the destruction of error, that a pure and holy life in Christ is a refutation of the argument of infidelity, that the brightness of noonday is the best answer to the gloom of midnight. Consequently he chose a practical method, and adopted a plan which exhibits the influence of Jesus Christ upon life. "He selected from the treasury of his recollections," Godet remarks,\* "a certain number of traits which he committed to writing, in order that the Church, whilst sharing

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\* "Commentary on Gospel."

his faith in the Messianic and divine character of Jesus, might partake of the life which he himself had found through faith in that name."

Thus his writing was governed by a purpose which should govern all religious writing. The Gospel is not principally a system of doctrines, but a method of life. Its doctrines, every one of them, have relations to life. They produce life as their fruit. This was the conviction of the aged apostle, whose experience had covered so many eventful years; and with this conviction to guide his pen, he wrote that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have *life* through His name." That he was wise in holding himself strictly to this grand purpose will be evident if it is remembered that:

1st. The activity of Jesus Christ finds its ultimate expression in character and life. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Again He said: "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This announcement of our Lord aroused the indignation of the Jews, who said among themselves: "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Then came the reply, so emphatic and plain that its meaning should not be questioned:

“ Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.” This reply instantly discovers the relation which our blessed Lord sustains to life. He declares solemnly that He is positively essential to life. Without Him there can be no life. “ Ye have no life in you.” Then He insists that there must be an acceptance of Him and His work, which resembles the eating and drinking of bread and wine. “ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” Besides, He somewhat interprets His work when He presents it as food and drink, inasmuch as food and drink must be adapted to the nature of him who is to receive them. His flesh is meat indeed, because His body has been broken for us in the crucifixion; and His blood is drink indeed, because that blood has been shed. The language is highly figurative, and yet the truth is not concealed. Without difficulty we grasp it. Its sig-



nificance becomes evident as we examine it. We shall not be superstitious, and believe that we may eat the veritable body and drink the real blood of Christ: nor, on the other hand, shall we reduce this most important announcement to an unmeaning commonplace. In one of his sermons Dr. Arnold \* remarked that "as it would be mere folly to suppose that Christ meant us to eat His flesh and blood, so it is not doing full justice to His meaning if we lose sight of this main truth that He is indeed to be the food of our souls: their daily and their main support, without whose nourishment they can not live in health"; and Dean Stanley, in his "Christian Institutions," † has said that this "is one of those startling expressions used by Christ to show us that He intends to drive us from the letter to the spirit, by which He shatters the crust and shell in order to force us to the kernel." "It is as if He said, 'It is not enough for you to see the outward face of the Son of Man, or to hear His outward words, or to touch His outward vesture. That is not Himself. It is not enough that you walk by His side, or hear others talk of Him, or use terms of affection and endearment towards Him. You must go deeper than this: you must go to His very inmost heart, to the very core and marrow of His being.'"

Hence the prompt recognition of the fact that the

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\* Sermons, Vol. I., Sermon 24.

† Page 94.

kingdom of God is within you is all-important ; and it is quite as important that there should be a recognition of the nature of that kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" : and still further that "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" are life, and life eternal should be as evident as are the ordinary conditions of physical well-being. When, therefore, Jesus Christ appears to establish the kingdom of God, when He labors so faithfully to make that kingdom real, we can not escape the conviction that the aim of His activity is character and life. He refused to head a rebellion against the authority of Rome ; He made no efforts whatever to build up a great establishment of social order ; He did not even outline a form of government for His Church. One thing was needful : character ; and its expression must be renewed and sanctified. A new man must appear. Through the energy of character the will of God must gain supremacy in the earth. Everything is made to bear upon this supreme result. The tree is to be known by its fruit. If the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," constantly appears, then His activity realizes its aim.

This was the understanding of Paul, whose splendid nature was so grandly affected by Christ, when he wrote, as he did to the Galatians : "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live : yet not I, but Christ

liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." He knew nothing of doctrines which were designed to be used as intellectual toys ; he could not find in any portion of the activity of our Lord a single feature which was not of practical service to him. His was a Christian character from its centre to its circumference ; and, as a consequence, his was a Christian life from the hour of its new birth to the hour of its triumph. Nor was he mistaken in his use of the Gospel. Experience has approved his estimate. Character and life still wait upon man's acceptance of the activity of our Lord. Bring any man, however degraded, to that acceptance, and you will quickly observe the transformation which grace effects. No power can equal it. Its aim is as direct as is that of the arrow, when it is shot by a skilful archer. Conscience is smitten by its deadly shaft. Alarm is felt. A cry is heard. An answer of hope is given. Consecration is witnessed. The beginning of better things introduces the endless life of peace and holiness.

Character and life, my friends, are worth saving. Every interest of our social order depends upon them. If character is corrupt and life is immoral, social order will be unstable and pernicious. Even Heaven would find its beauty and harmony destroyed by the presence of unholy character and vicious life. Christ came to

save the lost; and His salvation contemplates the perfect character and the spotless life which carry their own prophecies of perpetual, undying, glorious development. And this is what we crave. Death is dreadful. Yet the physical translation into life and immortality, often called death, is the chief of blessings. We are unclothed in order that we may be clothed upon; we are absent from the body in order that we may be present with the Lord. That translation is not death. Death is sin, the limitation of sin, the defilement of sin, the hopelessness of sin. "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." When the redeemed of all the ages are secure in Heaven; when the last soul has entered into the complete enjoyment of the perfect life that is known there; when every harp is in tune, and every voice melodious, and the song of saints and angels blends in harmony, then shall be known the exceeding riches of God's grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

2d. Character and life are determined by a central principle and a law of development. At the centre of every character there is a definite principle; and no life develops without reference to some special law. The principle is like the point of crystallization, around which nature forms her beautiful workman-

ship ; and the law is like the method of growth, which appears in vegetable and animal structures. The central principle will determine the character, and the law of development will determine its progress. There are mean, selfish characters, and their central principle is some contemptible, petty motive ; and there are unfruitful, useless lives, and their law of development is that of the upas tree ; then there are rich, noble characters, and their central principle is consecration to some holy service ; and there are brave, helpful lives, and their law of development is that of the oak. There are colorless characters, and positive characters, and attractive characters, and repulsive characters, and satanic characters, and godly characters. But in every case the character will correspond with its central principle. When that is known the character will be known. Let any man come forward and announce his ruling purpose, and you will quickly form an acquaintance with the man. Some one has said that "character builds an existence out of circumstance. Our strength is measured by our plastic power. From the same materials one man builds palaces, another hovels ; one warehouses, another villas. Bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks until the architect can make them something else. Thus it is that in the same family, in the same circumstances, one man rears a stately edifice, while his brother, vacillating and incompetent, lives forever amid ruins.

The block of granite which was an obstacle in the pathway of the weak becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong."

One of the most searching and helpful questions, therefore, is the inquiry as to the central principle. This is a question which many persons never raise. They appear to be drifting on the current of life rather than to be making intelligent and steady progress in a definite direction. How many of us, my friends, could answer satisfactorily if we should be asked, What are you living for? We might reply that we are living to have a good time; and we should have to blush in making the reply, because pleasure can not be regarded as a noble, supreme end; or we might reply, that we are living to succeed in business; and that reply would indicate a low estimate of the value of life, for business success is a means to usefulness, to enlarged opportunity, but it is not to be sought for its own sake; or we might reply, that we are living to make a great name, and that reply would outline our disregard of ease, of comfort, even of friendship, of everything that stands in the way of ambition; or we might reply, that we are living to serve God, to obey His commandments, to make our fellow-men acquainted with His love; and that reply would find its confirmation in the purity, the humility, the energy of a Christian life. I do not think that most men would like to face the



real central principle of their lives. Self-examination is never an agreeable task. We like to compliment ourselves. The superficial elements or features of life are those which flatter us. We turn very willingly to receive the greeting of our good deeds, such as they are; but we are not so ready to sit down to a solitary, closet conference with ourselves, and there to look fairly and honestly at ourselves. Such times admit of no deception. The good deeds are apt then to hang their heads and to slink away in shame. They know that they are not genuine. So many inferior motives have entered into their composition, that they are not pure expressions of a sacred love. "When I would do good," writes the apostle, "evil is present with me." Back of the good deeds are the motives, more retiring, and yet willing to submit to an examination. They are dismissed one by one; for, alas! too many of them are selfish or base. Then come the central principles, the supreme choices, which are quickly classified as for and against God. Some are apologetic, some are plausible, while one alone insists upon the demand that "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." This great central principle is uncompromising. It must assert itself supremely. From the decision of the will, it expects to rule the affections, the desires, and the appetites, so that "your whole spirit and soul and body may be

preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." How is it with you, my friend, in respect to the central principle of character? You are a man of the world, you answer. Yes! but are you not a man of God? You are a man of business. Yes! but are you not a man of God? You are a man of the farm or the workshop. Yes! but are you not a man of God? You are a man of books. Yes! but are you not a man of God? Each one of us may profitably institute a day of judgment for himself, and thus may anticipate the final decisions of that great day when ye shall "return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Those decisions will be based upon character, and the central principles of character will assuredly determine them. How important, therefore, that the central principle be the supreme choice of God! How important that this principle be made effective, while the character is still unformed! The child should be urged to love God; for very early in life we may discover the beginnings of a consecration which will eventually grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. If we believe in growth—and who does not?—by all means let us believe in spiritual growth; and if we believe in the necessity of a holy life, by all means let us encourage every child to trust God's Word and to accept the providence

and grace which a kind Heavenly Father offers. Child-life—sweet, fresh, buoyant—is a blessed reality. I should be sorry for the Gospel, or for our estimate of it, if Christian child life—bright, winsome, happy, loving—should ever fail of a cordial recognition. When is a child too young to love the Saviour? I do not know. But I am persuaded that there are many men among us here to-day, who would now be rejoicing in a good hope through grace, if the consideration of their lives years ago had been a welcome to the Saviour. It was not expected that a child should become a Christian. A child was kept at a distance. The fruit of the tree of life was too often propped up beyond the reach of the little hands. As a consequence, many a childish question was silenced, and many a childish aspiration was checked. The Gospel was preached from Mount Sinai instead of from the Mount of Beatitudes, and the thunder and lightning and fire and smoke terrified not a few youthful souls, who might have been won by the gentle voice of our blessed Lord. We need not try to improve upon His method. If He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me”; who are we that we dare to say that no little child can be a true disciple? Well has it been said “that the same grace of God that can recover a man from the error of his ways, if applied early enough and with proper constancy, can keep the boy from straying into ways of

error. The boy that has religious character enough to admit of his being ungodly, has religious character enough to admit of God's grace keeping him godly. If a child is far enough along to go astray, he is far enough along to have God's grace keep him from going astray."

3d. The central principle and the law of development which Jesus Christ makes real, restore the order of nature as God's supremacy is recognized in the beauty of holiness. The order of nature is the perfect type. Perfection was lost by the Fall. It appeared again in the humanity of Jesus Christ; and is to reappear in the holiness of His disciples. Then all that was lost will be found again. The celestial city, the abode of tried virtue, will more than match the excellence of Eden, the abode of innocence; the perfect man in Christ will be superior to the first man, Adam, who was created in the divine image. Herein is discovered the glorious triumph of redemption. Where sin abounds grace does much more abound. The restoration which our Lord Jesus Christ accomplishes is life, and life eternal; "according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

The Christian life which Jesus Christ aims to originate and then to develop, has its central principle and its law. The fruits of the Spirit are not hung upon it, as toys are hung upon a Christmas-tree. They are the natural products of growth. As the life grows these fruits appear. "I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples." "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye except ye abide in me." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Union with the Lord is evidently recognized here as the central principle of character and life; and that union is one of faith and love. He presents Himself as the object of faith. He asks us to accept Him. If we comply with His request He takes possession of our souls. Henceforth He is to be Supreme Master and Lord. We are no longer our own. Recognizing His authority, we rejoice that He may express in us His holy will. As a divine Saviour He has received our allegiance. We wish Him to do for us, and with us, as seems good to Him. Our attitude is one which we would not sustain toward any other being. For while we might possibly confide in the sagacity of some one else, we could not feel sure of His love; or while we might trust the love, we could not rest satisfied with the

sagacity. But with Jesus Christ, who has lived for us, and died for us, and who is now interceding for us, we can have no distrust. He deserves our implicit confidence, and He is able to reward it. Just as we are He welcomes us; and then He aims to renew us daily, to inspire a holy ambition, to rebuke pride, to refine us, to spiritualize every motive, so that He may "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Here, then, at the centre of character is a grand principle, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." We may refer to it constantly. It admits of numerous applications. Every other principle may be subordinated to it. As in education the man should always be superior to the specialist, so that the manhood of the physician, the lawyer, the scientist, the minister is more evident than any skill, or learning, or eloquence that may be possessed by the individual: in like manner, in life, the Christian should control the merchant, the farmer, the mechanic, every pleasure and every business. In the providence of God my work may be here or there, but by the grace of God, I am to do it as a Christian. "Brethren," writes Paul to pleasure-loving Corinth, "let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." We are not so much in need of place or opportunity as we are of fidelity. We need to appreciate the divine estimate of fidelity. Life is the essential thing,—rich, noble, holy life. The Christian is to manifest



such life in every place and under all circumstances. First the Christian, and then the physician, the lawyer, the scientist, or the minister. Down through all the pursuits of life, down into every variety of character, the love of Christ is expected to manifest its control ; so that men in every station, in every rank, in every vocation will exhibit its power.

“And so the Word had breath and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds,  
In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More strong than all poetic thought :

“Which he may read that binds the sheaf,  
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,  
And those wild eyes that watch the wave  
In roarings round the coral reef.”

To assist in the formation of character and the guidance of life, Jesus Christ gives us a law of development. This development—Christian living—is to proceed from the germ of consecration. It is by the expanding of that germ that we realize the beauty of holiness, or life eternal. To inform us, and also to encourage us, we are given this law. It consists of three terms,—an example, distinct rules, and an inspiration ; and it is administered through the personal agency of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ himself is the example. The endeavor is to be like Him. This endeavor is a rebuke and an encouragement—a rebuke of pride and sensualism, and an encouragement

of all that is lovely and of good report. How many follies we should escape, how many evils we should avoid, how many services we should render, how many virtues and graces we should apprehend if we should always look to Christ! How would He do under circumstances like these? What pleasures would He approve? In what pursuits would He join? Then comes the sweet consciousness that we are gradually resembling Him, that we are more charitable, that the world has less of a hold upon us, that we are caring more for Heaven. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." We have seen this resemblance. Christ-like men and women are not unknown. The model is reproduced in the holy living of Christian lives.

I can not enumerate the rules which have been given. You will find them in the Bible. Every Christian needs the Bible. As he becomes familiar with its sacred truths he finds that they are all instructive and helpful. A Christian without interest in the Bible should be as rare as a navigator without interest in the charts of the ocean, or as an astronomer without interest in the tables of celestial geography, or as a magistrate without interest in the statutes of the commonwealth, or as a child without interest in news from home. The Bible rewards study. It may

seem to be a book of mysteries, but the intelligence of the Holy Spirit will make those mysteries plain, and will thus present them, one by one, as the truths of life.

To stimulate endeavor, to quicken and to energize spiritual life, we have the inspiration of love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." That love is a precious reality. The Holy Spirit keeps it warm and influential. More and more does it discover its excellence as experience ripens. This love knows no disappointments, but many surprises. For while it enters with forgiveness, and announces pardon to the penitent soul, it is constantly opening new possibilities and revealing new prospects, until, at last, it stands beside the gate of Heaven and receives the ransomed of the Lord, to the perfect joy of life with God. Then the soul is completely filled with the divine fulness; then the fellowship, interrupted by sin and restored by grace, makes God a friend as well as a Ruler, a companion as well as a king. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Such was the communion of Eden. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." Such is the communion of Heaven. Life is capable of a divine fellowship. Only through life may we hope to be prepared

to enter into the many mansions in the Father's house. "Out of self, into Christ, up to glory," are the three steps of this divine progress. Christian character, Christian life, and Christian immortality are inseparably united.

It is to confirm and to develop faith that the Lord's Supper invites us. This Supper, instituted by our divine Lord and Saviour, is one of the strongest evidences in support of His life and work. Without Him it can not be explained. Into His gracious presence it conducts us. We are convinced anew that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then, according to His own promise, we find that He communicates Himself to us, by the Holy Spirit, in the sacred bread and wine, and that we are fed and cheered as we thus receive Him. Life discovers its richness and blessedness. We sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and enjoy a foretaste of that communion which the saints around the throne are realizing constantly. This is life, true life, life worthy of endless duration. God bring us all to the experiences of this holy life, and to His name shall be praise forever!

## XVI.

### LEAVEN.—THE INFLUENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

*"Another parable spake He unto them: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.'"*—MATT. xiii. 33.

THE familiar process of bread-making presents a beautiful illustration of the influence of Jesus Christ. His influence affects the individual and social life of the world, as the leaven which the housewife used affected the measures of meal. She selected a substance which was distinct from, and yet adapted to, the nature of the meal; and the influence of Jesus Christ is a blessed reality which is distinct from, and yet adapted to, the nature of man. Man must receive it as a precious gift of God, which he is able to appropriate. When he does so he may appreciate its power. The leaven was placed in intimate contact with the meal; and this divine influence must take possession of the heart, in order that it may produce its effects upon character and life. It always works from the heart to the character and thence to the life. The meal was moistened and heated before the leaven

discovered its activity, just as the heart must be quickened and stimulated by the Holy Spirit, if the influence of Jesus Christ is to make itself felt. That influence is often present when no response whatever is given to its appeals; and then again its presence is joyfully recognized and its good work begins. The Holy Spirit can prepare for its reception. But without that preparation the sacred influence of the Redeemer would be as impotent as leaven in measures of dry meal. Silently the leaven permeated the measures of meal in which it had been placed, until the whole was leavened; and the assurance is given that the influence of Jesus Christ will reach to every portion of human nature, "spirit and soul and body," and to every interest of social life. The triumph is to be complete. Thus a very simple process of the domestic economy appears with instructive analogies, which have reference to the progress of the kingdom of God.

But while these analogies are so evident that they can hardly escape detection, there is one which is dependent for its announcement upon the labors of the chemist. More than a century ago the discovery was made that "leaven is a mass of active, living cells, each about the 3000th of an inch in diameter, performing within itself all the functions of life, and multiplying by self-division." \* "These minute cells,"

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\* MacMillan, "Two Worlds are Ours," p. 158.



chemistry tells us, "which constitute living matter in almost its simplest condition, grow and propagate with inconceivable rapidity; a single cubic inch of leaven, during the heat of fermentation, containing upwards of eleven hundred and fifty-two millions of them." With this understanding, the thought of the parable instantly gains in energy and beauty. All that has been said of its analogies remains true, and now it is possible to add this pervasive, life-imparting, life-distributing conception of the divine influence. That influence is to diffuse itself by becoming at each new point of contact a centre of life. What then is the influence? How are we to explain it? Is there a science of the Gospel, which enables us to trace the influence of Jesus Christ as it makes itself felt in every least particular of life? Our definition of this influence may properly be given in the language of God's Word. Therefore, we may say that:

1st. The influence of Jesus Christ is "the grace of God that bringeth salvation." "By the grace of God I am what I am," writes Paul, "and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." In this clear expression of his dependence upon divine grace, the apostle indicates the source of all spiritual life. He is aware that he is entirely destitute of spiritual life until he receives the grace of God. Spiritual life can

not be aroused by any process of spontaneous generation. It must be imparted as the grace of God is bestowed. The alkaline plains of the American desert do not burst out into fertility unless the water of irrigation reaches them. Water is the essential condition of fertility. From the snow-capped mountains whence the streams are called by the warmth of the sun, the water is conducted by the inventive skill of man into the heart of the desert. There it makes its presence known in the verdure of the meadows, in the fragrance of the gardens. The grace of God is the water of life, whose contact with human nature means the renovation of every thought, of every affection. The penitent thief, to whom the grace of God came with hope in a dying hour on the cross, discovered instantly the faith which was thus aroused. That faith was the beginning of a holy walk and conversation. Without it there could have been no readiness whatever to accompany our Lord as He entered Paradise; while with it there was a preparation for the enjoyment of the life around the throne. "Grow in grace," is a command which recognizes the necessity of possessing grace. Unless, therefore, we receive the grace of God we surely can not hope to develop that grace. Culture is not a substitute for grace, nor is morality. Grace is distinct. It must be distinguished from all human excellence. A gracious experience and a gracious life have their origin in the sincere acceptance of grace.

Consequently the judgment of the world is not God's judgment. He demands grace. He looks for grace. The world applauds strength and beauty and pomp. It has little consideration for grace. Looking on the outward appearance, the world estimates character by conduct. Looking on the heart God considers the real issues of life. A man of wealth once invited a friend to go with him to the roof of his house that he might see his possessions. Waving his hand toward the west, he said: "All that is my estate." Then pointing in another direction, he added: "That splendid farm is mine." Again directing attention to a large house, he continued: "And that too is mine." Quietly his visitor heard him, and then pointing to a little village among the trees, remarked: "In that village there is a woman who can say more than all this." "Indeed," was the instant response, "what can she say?" "Why, sir, she can say 'Christ is mine.'" Thus it comes to pass that the poor of this world are often rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him. Grace exhibits a few of its advantages and blessings in this life; but in the life which is to come it yields the treasures of immortality in Heaven.

For Paul associates the everlasting life of the saints with the triumph of grace when he writes to the Ephesians: "God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead

in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Those endless ages of the eternal day will witness no dependence upon human merit, will hear no boasts of man's good deeds. There will be a sincere consciousness that the grace of God has begun and is continuing the good work which makes possible a sinner's residence in Heaven.

Grace is the influence of Jesus Christ, as it is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This influence may be traced to the love of God. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Grace is God's love. But the love of God is not always grace. There is a love which shines in every ray of sunlight, which sparkles in every dew-drop, which smiles in every flower, which speaks in every song of bird, which is written upon the rocks, which sustains the ordinary life of man. This love is divine goodness, or benevolence, rather than the grace of God. Grace is redemptive love, love which is tinged with the blood of a priceless sacrifice, love which reaches us by way of the manger and the cross, love which exhibits God's regard for justice in the atonement of a voluntary substitute, love which provides for the complete justification of a penitent sinner, love which is

the unmerited favor of God who wishes to save, love which is pressed upon our acceptance by the Holy Spirit. The love of God which has ever been His purpose to redeem is grace; the love of God which was expressed by our dear Lord when He lived and suffered and died, is grace; the love of God which is now making real and effective the work of Jesus Christ, is grace. Grace is a comprehensive term. It is love, and yet it is more than love, or rather it is love divinely conditioned by sacrifice. Reaching our hearts and gaining possession of them, it makes the influence of Jesus Christ an absolute control. "We love Him because He first loved us." His perfect life secures our admiration; His teaching commends itself; His work becomes our only confidence; His Spirit is a sweet and blessed inspiration. "We count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Self-denial becomes the law, whose obedience is spiritual happiness. We wish in all things to submit entirely to the will of God. That will is infinite wisdom and infinite love. We rest in it, and by and by we rejoice in it. Faber has not gone beyond the truth of Christian experience in his song:

"I worship thee, sweet will of God!  
And all thy ways adore,  
And every day I live I seem  
To love thee more and more.

Thou wert the end, the blessed rule  
Of our Saviour's toils and tears ;  
Thou wert the passion of His heart  
Those three and thirty years.  
And He hath breathed into my soul  
A special love of thee,  
A love to lose my will in His,  
And by that loss be free."

Can you not appreciate the splendid possibilities which wait upon our acceptance of such a divine influence? This is a life-imparting power. Christ's presence is a real presence. He lives in the hearts of His disciples, and there He makes His presence known. Is anything too hard for Him? Can He make His way against every obstacle? Most assuredly! There lives not the man whose nature He can not subdue; and there is no institution which He is unable to transform by grace. Only give Him the opportunity; only welcome His influence; only make His authority supreme, then await the results with patient faith, with holy expectation. For the spring-time of life will surely come, and after that the summer; and the golden age of social order will find its solidity and permanence in the love of man, which is a response to the grace of God.

2d. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation" enters into the soul of man to produce in his life the Christian graces. The grace of God is not the Christian graces, although it may be said to be the material



out of which those graces are formed. Between the grace of God and the Christian graces there is always a human life. This human life receives the grace, appropriates it, and then expresses it in the graces. A luscious peach, so fresh and juicy, may be said to be composed of the acids and alkalies of the earth, the oxygen and nitrogen of the atmosphere, and the oxygen and hydrogen of water. Yet who does not know that the peach-tree is essential to the production of a peach? These inorganic substances, many of them invisible, are received by the tree through roots and leaves, and are then assimilated. Presently the peach appears. Without these substances there would be no peach, and without the peach-tree there would be no peach. In like manner grace is dependent upon human life for the production of the graces. No one can see the grace of God until it appears as the graces. Then it is evident. For, as our Saviour said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles." A most instructive experience confirms the testimony of God's Word, which assures us that the Christian graces are evidences of His grace. Grace in the heart will produce the graces in the life.

These graces, if we may accept the enumeration of the Apostle Peter, are the essential elements of the best life. Indeed, without them no life can be even respectable. The general agreement of public senti-

ment demands the presence of these elements to some degree at least. For what is life if it has no recognition of that counsel which urges that you should "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity"? The ethical philosopher meets the Christian teacher on the common ground of the necessity of these requirements, although he often fails to appreciate the method of grace which can make these requirements real. His method is apt to be one of self-restraint, or of self-discipline. He does not employ a divine influence which brings a holy, life-imparting energy into contact with evil, and which originates and develops holiness to take the place of sin. The remark is often made that the reformation of a drunkard can never be accomplished without the grace of God. Drunkenness produces such debasing effects upon the whole nature. Its tendencies are so brutalizing. By it conscience is seared. Sensibility of every sort is destroyed. The outlook appears to be hopeless. Yet, as one who has experienced the drunkard's misery, has remarked, "Many who know that they have lost the control of themselves by too frequent indulgence, are anxious to conquer the habits they have contracted, have made resolutions to amend their ways, have been successful in battling the

evil in their own strength for a while, but have finally yielded again to temptation, and at each attempt losing more of their self-respect, they have advanced further on the road to self-indulgence, and sunk deeper into the mire. And yet, they exclaim to themselves, 'What would I not give could I relinquish this terrible habit of intemperance forever?' " There is no power of self-restraint. The will has become enfeebled. To cease from all intemperance and to stop there is to exorcise the demons and to leave the nature of the man empty. That will not do. Human nature can not exist as a vacuum. Its cravings must be met and satisfied. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is competent to supply the need. His presence is not only a sentinel to announce the approach of a sinful and dangerous appeal, but also a cheering and companionable friend to enlist the sympathies and to sustain the affections and to strengthen the will. Soldiers always behave well in camps and on battle-fields if they know that a beloved officer is observant. This is an accepted principle. The grace of God employs it. "Christ in you the hope of glory," is the best temperance pledge. Let the reclaimed drunkard realize his dependence upon Christ. Let him appreciate his own weakness. Let him pray constantly for strength. Let him welcome the beneficent, cheering witness of the Spirit with his spirit that he is a child of God.

But we are instructed to address every other vice with this same method. It is successful with one, and it has been successful with all. Drunkenness yields to it, and so does violence, and so does pride, and so does selfishness. It is destructive only that it may be constructive. It kills only to bring to life again. There is no one of us who has an evil habit which is beyond the recognition of the influence of Jesus Christ. That influence considers the foibles as well as the faults of character, and aims to secure the passive graces as well as those that are active. Its ideal is the perfect man, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"; and it works toward that ideal as patiently as nature works toward the attainment of typical beauty. I need not tell you, for you are as wise in this as I can be, that if you sincerely accept the grace of God, if you freely surrender to its authority, you will begin a progress which, like the path of the just, will shine brighter and brighter away on to the perfect day. Before you is "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." You will carry with you, this sacred influence, the pledge of your ultimate sanctification. You will find support in every hour of weakness, comfort in every hour of sorrow, joy in every hour of calm experience, and hope in the supreme hour when death is announced. If I could believe that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, have received the in-

fluence of Jesus Christ, the grace of God ; if I could feel confident that ye would never frustrate that grace ; if I could hope that ye, my friends, would permit it to manifest its strength and beauty in your hearts and lives, I would require no prophetic foresight, no vision of inspired seer to disclose the years opening before you and leading to the city of God. Your conflicts and your victories would be evident, your afflictions and your consolations would appear, your prosperity and your refinement would manifest themselves. Those years would be crowded with patient, self-denying services. They would exhibit your considerateness, your enlarging intellectual and moral capacity, your holy aspiration, your delight in God, your preparation for His presence, your departure to be with Christ, which is far better. I fear not the future, if it is a future filled with Christ. I am ready to trust any life to the years that lie before us, if the life is hid with Christ in God.

3d. The Christian graces, in their present manifestations of strength and beauty, encourage the endeavors which aim to secure the Redeemer's triumph. We must make the confession, for truth demands it, that we have never given the grace of God a fair opportunity, either in our own lives or in the social life of the world. We seem to be afraid to trust God's grace. Numberless appliances have been invented, by well-meaning persons, to help the grace of God.

With our lack of faith they are perhaps essential ; but when the day of a strong faith comes to us we shall cast them all aside, as the stripling David did the armor of King Saul, that he might use his sling in dependence upon the God of Israel. And why should we not have faith ? The grace of God is not a suggestion of yesterday, with which we are asked to experiment. It has been in use for centuries, and its successes have been recorded by many historians. Individual and social life can exhibit evidences of the power of divine grace, which should silence every criticism. Here is Paul, a man of magnificent proportions, and he yielded himself entirely to the control of grace : and here is Augustine, whose brilliant career was ennobled and enlarged after Ambrose had taught him to appreciate the influence of Jesus : here is Anselm, who crossed the Alps, and made his way at last to the See of Canterbury, an Italian becoming thus the primate of Britain, and realizing at every step of his progress the sanctifying control of our blessed Lord : here is Bernard of Clairvaux, whose Christian manhood made the rude hut which he occupied the centre of Christendom, whence, in the name of Christ, he rebuked kings and prelates, and where he preached a Gospel whose magnetism drew princes and courtiers to a holy life : here is John Knox, whose stern, heroic nature was worth more than an army to any cause, surrendering promptly



and entirely to the demands of grace: here is Rutherford, whose persecutions witnessed to the reality of sustaining grace, so that he was able to call his gloomy prison "Christ's palace in Aberdeen": here is Baxter, announcing through grace the "Saint's Rest": and Jeremy Taylor, writing "The truth as it is in Jesus," concerning "Holy living" and "Holy dying": here is Luther, stripping from the tree of life the fungus growths of ages of worldliness and superstition; and here is Bunyan, sending forth his pilgrim to journey on to Heaven with the strength and direction of grace: here is Wesley, organizing a spiritual campaign, whose victories have planted the cross in almost every land: and here is Chalmers, solving the problem of pauperism, with the assistance of grace: here are the abodes of cannibalism, transformed by grace into Christian homes: and here are the amenities of life, possessed by nations once savage, to whom the grace of God has come.

I might ask you to consider the influence of Jesus as it has affected child-life, and you would be compelled to visit the nurseries and the schools, in which the Gospel is now moulding the coming generation; I might ask you to consider its influence upon woman's life, and you would quickly acknowledge that the Christian nations of the world give to woman the only estimate at all approaching her natural rights; I might ask you to consider its influence

upon slavery, and you could hardly fail to acknowledge that the Epistle to Philemon states the principle which has loosened the fetters of the slave until they have fallen from his limbs; I might ask you to consider its influence upon criminals, and you would become interested in the good work which was inaugurated by John Howard and Elizabeth Fry; I might ask you to consider its influence upon war, and you would surely take notice of the prevalence of arbitration, as well as of the desire to mitigate the severity of war; I might ask you to consider its influence upon toleration, and you would be obliged to account for the deliverances of the Berlin Conference respecting intercourse with the Congo territory. "The peculiarity of Christ's teachings in regard to political matters," a thoughtful writer remarks, "was that He left them entirely on one side, but threw in a principle into human society which was destined in after ages to overthrow or modify all existing institutions and governments." He was in no haste. Long periods of gradual improvement were evident to His prescience. The leaven hid in the measures of meal required time for its complete expression. So we wait, and yet we wait with patient expectation. The present and the past are the earnest of the future. Our Christian optimism is not credulity. We do not believe that

“ *Somehow* good  
Will be the final goal of ill ”;

we do not expect to awake to the realization that we have suddenly reached Utopia; we are not anticipating the millennium to-morrow or the next day. Nothing of the sort. Grave evils confront us. The social questions which demand a solution will all be answered before “the new Heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” shall appear. We may agree as to this, even if we can not agree as to the best methods of solving the questions. For Christian civilization can never rest satisfied until the poor are considered, until the weak are protected, until opportunity is afforded. We shudder when we hear the explosion of dynamite, but what shall we do? Shall we redouble our guards and immure ourselves in splendid palaces as the Russian Czar has? Shall we refuse to go out, and to look upon our fellow-men, and to inquire how they are living, and what they need? Christ says: “Go, and I will go with you.” But this means contact, and contact means insult, and insult precedes violence, and violence may end in death. Yet “it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.” In His name He bids us approach our fellow-men. With His grace He commands us to rescue them. Into their lives this grace will enter to make itself felt as the power of God unto salvation.

Why should we hesitate? Is the Church feeble in numbers, in wealth, in intelligence, in social influence? Far from being feeble, we fear that her great strength is a source of weakness, because strength begets self-confidence. In the United States alone, the Church enrolls more than ten million communicants in a population of fifty millions. And who does not know that the wealth of the Church, and the intelligence of the Church, and the social influence of the Church have never been equalled? Has our Lord any message to His Church? Does He speak to you, my friends, who are looking forward to years of service? When the Church was very small—some five hundred strong—He said, as He contemplated the conquest of the world, “Preach the Gospel.” That was all. “Preach the Gospel.” Would He say so now? Has He, think you, lost confidence in the power of His graces? Would He devise some new measures? No! He desires the Christian graces, and nothing but the grace of God is competent to their production. Let us sympathize with Him! Let us depend more than we do upon God’s grace! Let us use it more faithfully!

What, then, is the need of the present? I answer, unhesitatingly, a firm confidence in the influence of Jesus Christ; a confidence that traces His influence to its source in the heart of God; a confidence that believes in His ability and readiness to make Himself

felt in every life and in every community; a confidence that holds firmly to the Holy Spirit's intelligent, pervasive, invincible activity. Men need the Gospel. Society needs the Gospel. Not philosophy, not speculation, not any form of words, but the Gospel of the grace of God which once conquered the Roman Empire, and which has since given us the Protestant Reformation. Let us believe this with sincere and effective belief.

Again I ask, what is the need of the present? And I answer promptly, that all Christians should use the influence of Jesus Christ; that they should use it in the formation of their own characters and in helpful work for others. For believe me, my friends, when I say, that there is nothing that you can do for a human being which will prove so helpful to him as to lead him to accept the grace of God. When the grace of God is universally accepted and as universally manifested, there will be no communism, no nihilism, no dynamite, no drunkenness, no pauperism, no stealing, no lying, no murder, no cruelties, no wars. Then peace will be the hum of cheerful industry, and love will be the bond of social union, and comfort will be known at every fireside, and prayer will be heard in all lands, and the Redeemer will come again to visit His people, and there will be a long season of happy, safe, holy prosperity.

Once more I ask, what is the need of the present?

And I answer gladly, hope. The Gospel promises have been confirmed already. God will not forget His word. He has met it faithfully in many ways. We may hope, and thus await the triumph.

Two historical incidents may serve to emphasize the truth which we have been considering. In the tenth century it was announced to the world that Vladimir, the Grand Duke of Russia, was proposing to change his religion. Instantly ambassadors appeared at court to represent the advantages of many different religions. The cautious monarch, however, decided to send his own ambassadors to visit the nations, and to consider the characteristics of the religions in the homes of those who held to them. At Constantinople, and in the ancient church of St. Sophia, the splendid service of the Greek Liturgy captivated them, and they returned to declare that they had "felt as if in the presence of the Angels of Heaven." Vladimir accepted their report; and he and his court were thereupon baptized in the waters of the Dneiper. Then using his autocratic authority, he commanded his subjects to be baptized, and they obeyed him; he compelled his armies to accept Christianity and the soldiers were enlisted under the banner of the cross. Thus the Gospel, in a few years, secured a formal recognition, while, alas, its spiritual power, its liberty, its purity of thought and action were little known. Russia is still Cossack, although



nearly nine centuries have passed since the baptism of the Grand Duke. A formal recognition of the Gospel was not the hiding of the leaven in the measures of meal.

Let us go back a few hundred years, and then let us stand upon the Irish coast and observe a little company of resolute men who are launching a rude vessel on the waters of Loch Foyle. They have no swords, no spears, no instruments of war, and yet they are soldiers. A few seeds, a net, and some food constitute their cargo, although we must not fail to mention the copy of parts of the Holy Scriptures which they have placed in a wallet of skin. They are all young men of education, and they all know the grace of God. Columba, an Irish nobleman, is their leader, and they have resolved to carry the Gospel to the heathen tribes beyond the sea. The wind is fair. Their spreading sail soon bears them to an island, from which, as they can see their native land, which they have resolved to leave out of sight, they depart to settle at last among the hills of Iona. Here they began their work of preaching. The neighboring tribes—rude and idolatrous—were visited, and to them the unsearchable riches of Christ were made known. Their busy pens multiplied copies of the sacred writings, which they placed in the hands of the people. Learning that Brude, a powerful king of the Picts, had refused to receive

them, Columba approached the closed gate of his fortress, singing, as he advanced, the 45th Psalm. The gate was opened. The missionary was admitted. His message was heard. The Gospel found a place in the hearts of the tribes, where its manifestations in character and life have given to the world the splendid history of the Church of Scotland. No formal recognition of Christianity has made that history. It has been a tribute to the subduing, elevating power of the grace of God.

The contrast is instructive. May we learn the lesson, and prove our intelligence by our fidelity to the influence of Jesus Christ! "For Christ," said the great apostle, "sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel"; and the Master himself declared that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," "for behold the kingdom of God is within you."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

## XVII.

“OUT OF SELF, INTO CHRIST, UP TO GLORY.”—THE FUTURE WITH JESUS CHRIST.

*“If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.”*—JOHN xii. 26.

To serve is to follow, and to follow is to enter into the joy of the Lord. Service requires an intimacy of fellowship, which is the vital union of Christ and the Christian; and a divine leadership is a safe conduct from earth to heaven. No one can serve who is unwilling to deny himself and to take up his cross daily; and no one can follow who hesitates to go with Christ even to death and the grave. “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” God is not arbitrary. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” “The inheritance of the saints in light” is the natural expression of a love which brings hope to penitence. “Strait

is the gate and narrow is the way," and the pilgrimage ends when the city is reached. The servant who follows the Master day by day is preparing to share with the Master the glory of a higher service. Holy character waits upon the discipline of service. "The recompense of the reward" is bestowed upon those who are able to appreciate it.

Thus the future life of the Christian is the perfecting of his present life with Christ. Death is a great event, but in reality it is not so great an event as conversion; for conversion is the beginning of that spiritual life whose expansion is to continue forever. That life comes to the hour of death as the heir reaches the period of his majority, or as the scholar approaches the day of his graduation. New responsibilities announce themselves. Under new conditions grace discovers its excellence. Beyond the material and the visible, this mortal puts on immortality. There is no loss, except the welcome loss of sin; no forgetfulness, except the forgetting of every unworthy and disturbing memory; no inaction, no torpor. Life is still real and earnest. The intellect is alive, and eager in its pursuit of truth; the heart is warm, and happy in its attachment to all that is pure; and the will knows no conflict of choices, for every choice is subordinated to the love of God. The earthly has given place to the heavenly. Where Christ is, there also His servant is.

When Frederick Denison Maurice—a man whose spirituality was intensely keen and appreciative—approached the hour of his departure, he quietly remarked to the friends who stood around his bed: “I am not going to Death, I am going into Life.” Then, with a benediction upon his lips, he closed his eyes and ceased to breathe. Of such a departure he had himself said: “As men watch the last breath of a dear friend, they seize his language; they feel that they have a right to it. They say, A moment ago he was mortal, and now he is free. It has been but a twinkling of an eye, and what a change has come! Though the decaying, agonized frame is lying calm and at rest, he who spoke a few minutes before did not derive his powers of speech, any more than the celestial smile, which still remains on the clay from that clay.”

When he heard of this translation, the Dean of Wells, Dr. Plumptre, expressed himself most beautifully in these simple lines:

“He, too, is there! and can we dream  
Their joy is other now than when  
They dwelt among the sons of men,  
As walking in the eternal gleam?”

“We know not, but if life be there  
The outcome and the crown of this;  
What else can make their perfect bliss  
Than in the Master’s work to share?”

“ Resting, but not in slumbrous ease,  
Working, but not in wild unrest,  
Still ever blessing, ever blest,  
They see us as the Father sees.”

This conception of the future life rests upon the assurances of the divine Word and upon Christian consciousness. The divine Word reveals it, and Christian consciousness—another word of God—announces, in many a sure prophecy, the bright, cheerful hopes which make it easy “to depart and to be with Christ.”

The word of the Lord Jesus Christ promises to the Christian a blessed immortality in Heaven. A moment's reflection would convince any one that Jesus Christ announced a life after death, and that He associated that life with the life of the present. From the first hour of His public ministry to the last, He was engaged in an endeavor to persuade men that death does not end all, and that a peaceful, happy existence awaits those who prepare for it by faith in Him. He was never betrayed into anything like sentimental expressions, nor did He ever attempt to gratify an idle curiosity. With firmness and emphasis the truth was spoken, while His silence was always eloquent.

The truth, as He presented it, is a declaration of the important fact that there is a distinct place into which the righteous enter when they die. He refers



to this place when He says to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise": when He speaks of Lazarus, who was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: when He announces the coming of many from the East and West, who shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven: when He discourses upon the many mansions in His Father's house, and upon the preparations which He proposes to make to receive His disciples: when He pronounces His benedictions, and calls the righteous to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. These references *may* be regarded as figurative. Yet they are interpreted by the plainest statements respecting life. How frequently our Lord gives the promise of eternal life! How fond He appears to be of dwelling upon the significance of life! Life, as He regards it, is evidently spiritual perfection. Human nature is at its best when it has this life eternal. Such life is not known here, and yet we have the earnest of it even now. It is a life which requires a residence, and that residence is Heaven. "Father," you can hardly fail to recall the precious language of the intercessory prayer, "I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me *where* I am: that they may *behold* my glory which Thou hast given me: for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." What can be made of such an entreaty if it has no reference to

the condition of the disciples after death? Our Lord was just ready to close His work. In a few days He would return to His throne. Can we understand Him if we refuse to recognize His desire for the companionship, close and intimate, of those whose love He has won? "Where I am there ye may be also," is His promise. Does He mean what He says? If so, is not His meaning evident? Has the Church been mistaken in accepting these pledges? Shall we begin now to erase from the tablets which record the faith of the departed all these precious words of the Redeemer? Must we read anew that triumphant challenge to death and the grave which Martha of Bethany heard as Jesus approached her brother's sepulchre? Can we reduce that splendid declaration of immortal blessedness which has sustained the faith of all the Christian centuries to a mere announcement of spiritual revival? Lazarus was dead. He had been dead four days. The broken-hearted Martha greeted the arrival of Jesus with the half-complaining exclamation: "If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Jesus replied instantly: "Thy brother shall rise again." Then Martha answered: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Now what had Jesus to say; what did He say? He was in the presence of a sorrowful woman. How did He meet her confidence? Jesus said unto her: "I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Certainly He could not have wished to convey the impression that the believer will never come under the power of physical death; for He himself felt that power and yielded to it. He must have looked on to the future life, which is entered through physical death as a gateway. In view of His own life and work He was able to promise deliverance and triumph to His disciples.

We shall not readily relinquish our hold upon "the truth as it is in Jesus" respecting immortality. We need this truth. Ours is a world of sickness, of death, and of graves. "Friend after friend departs." We crave knowledge of the future. After death, what? Up to the boundary line we advance with the gifted spirits whose presence has made life desirable, and then our farewells are spoken. A frail, decaying body is left to us, sightless, speechless, pulseless. And is that all? Where is the gifted spirit? Tell me not that we must be satisfied to remain in ignorance. We can not be satisfied. Yonder man, whose friends are all around him, in health and vigor, may think that he is satisfied. But let death touch the cheek of that lovely daughter: let the grave open to receive the form of that idolized son: and then venture, if you dare, to talk about annihilation or ignorance. No! No! the pressure of a practical ex-

perience is recognized in the wistful, anxious cry for knowledge. Is there another life? What are its conditions? How is its blessedness secured?

To this cry the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ are a response. His presence is assuring. We know that He is faithful and true, and we also know that He came down from Heaven. Just as in our ordinary journeys to distant parts of the earth, we accept the testimony of credible witnesses; just as we should not hesitate to sail forth from the secure harbors upon a trackless ocean in expectation of reaching another continent of which we have heard; so in this supreme journey we accept the statements of the Son of Man concerning Heaven and the course thither. We believe what He says. We believe that He speaks advisedly. He has told us earthly things, and His speech has been confirmed; may we not believe when He tells us heavenly things?

The prophecies of a Christian life demand for their fulfilment a residence with Christ Jesus our Lord in Heaven. Every life presents its own prophecies. The living epistles, known and read of all men, are covered with predictions of future blessedness or misery. Not more evident are the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi. Judas Iscariot went to his own place when his wretched career of treachery had been cut short by suicide. There was but one place for which he had prepared himself.

The hypocrisy of his attendance upon the Master could not conceal the cunning and duplicity of his wicked heart. He was a bad man from the beginning, and he grew worse instead of better as the years advanced. Without a radical change—a change which would have been indicated by his sincere penitence—he could not have made his way to Heaven. On the other hand, Stephen's life was an anticipation of the joy of Heaven. He was a heavenly evangelist, even when he contended with the learned men of the synagogues. "Looking steadfastly on him they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." A holy constraint was advancing him toward the perfect life which Heaven knows. His spiritual vision was clarified. He seemed to be out of the body before death released him. "He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said: 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.'" His happy experience was not exceptional. It has been shared by many of our Lord's disciples. The prophecy of the saintly life has discovered its fulfilment, and the veil has been lifted with an assured confidence that Heaven is not far away. The English Laureate, with a poet's truthful insight, has appreciated this prophetic attitude of holiness, and has sung of those

“To whom was given  
The joy that mixes man with Heaven ;

“Who, rowing hard against the stream,  
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,  
And did not dream it was a dream :

“But heard by secret transport led,  
Ev’n in the charnels of the dead,  
The murmur of the fountain head.

“Which did accomplish their desire,  
Bore and forbore, and did not tire,  
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.”

Oh ! that we might be led to consider these prophecies ! They are surely most impressive. Heaven is not entered by accident. No happy chance will transport the sensualist from his cups and his revelry to the marriage supper of the Lamb ; no process of development will bring the infidel to rejoice in the worship of our divine Redeemer ; no sentimental clemency will open the gates of pearls to welcome men who have lived and died without reference to the essential work of grace. “Ye must be born again.” The new birth of the Holy Spirit establishes the character which has “its fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.”

For the Christian life is a reality. We may judge of its quality ; we may test its method ; we may discover its foundation. The foundation is Jesus Christ, inasmuch as the Christian life rests upon His person



and work. He is beneath all Christian life. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." As in the erection of a house, the foundation is indicative of the strength, the durability, and the general form of the structure, so is it in the Christian life. If a man proposes to build a shelter for cattle, he does not lay the substantial foundations that he uses when he prepares to build a home for his family. When he is providing a permanent home, his foundations are massive. As his means allow, so he provides for the future. Jesus Christ, as a foundation, is secured freely. No one is so poor that he is unable to establish his life on this best foundation. He may depend upon the salvation, which his Lord has provided. He may commit himself unreservedly to this divine Protector. Here is his confidence for time and for eternity. You may destroy a structure by fire, by tempest, by violence, and yet the foundation will remain; and from the foundation, the structure may rise again. But when the foundation is gone, all is gone. This is what Paul meant when he said that "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is"; and that there are some who "shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Careless building upon the true foundation is possible. There may be a Christian beginning without a proper Christian progress. One may accept the Saviour, and then become very worldly. If so, the

life-work will prove a loss. The trial by fire will consume the gold, the silver, the precious stones, the wood, the hay, the stubble, and nothing will be left but the foundation. That means salvation ; but not the abundant entrance which should be secured into the Heavenly kingdom, not the carrying into Heaven of the treasures of a well-spent life. Occasionally we meet with this phase of experience, when we find, at death, that a neglected, abused Christian hope, a hope which was cherished, perhaps, in early life, revives and asserts itself. God does not disregard it, as its presence becomes evident ; but we know that it fails to meet His cordial approbation.

For the foundation indicates the plan of the structure. There are living stones in the quarry of the Divine Word, which may be built up into a spiritual house. These living stones are all accessible. The Divine Word is within our reach. We may, each Christian for himself, shape these living stones, and lay them, course by course, upon the foundation. What are we building? Why! a holy temple to the Lord, in which the melodious symphonies of sanctified praise shall never cease to be heard, in which the truths of salvation shall be proclaimed with the eloquence of a devout activity, in which the presence of the Holy Spirit shall be manifest, as love and peace, mercy and faith, resignation and aspiration, are luminous from the light within. God calls no man to erect

a banqueting-hall as a place of revelry, nor an exchange as a mart of commerce, nor a dungeon in which he may seclude himself. The architecture of the earth responds to many demands of selfishness and pleasure and business. Not so with the architecture of Heaven. There the demand is unique. The one, essential requirement is "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Each life, in its personal building, must meet this requirement, and thus render glory to God. When I watch the patient workmen who here upon this sloping hill-side and in yonder valley express such a variety of thoughts in stone and timber, as they provide homes for the people, I wonder if they, and those for whom they labor, remember that there is "a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens," whose architect is God, whose foundation is Jesus Christ, whose plan and specifications are contained in the Bible, whose ultimate purpose is that it may be "a habitation of God through the Spirit." Carefully do they build these homes, which soon must be vacated. With no restraint of industry and sacrifice does love provide for the comfort of the precious household, which may not hope to be long united. It is well! God bless these homes! God honor those who bring to them the best of offerings! But oh! let us not forget that there is another house, which is not of this building. Oh! let us not fail to build the holy temple, which is our house from Heaven!

The reality of the Christian life is so evident that we require no extended argument in support of it. We know natural flowers when we see them; and even if we are sometimes deceived, for a moment, by the skilful imitations of art, we soon discover our mistake. The Queen of Sheba, it is said, tested the wisdom of Solomon by placing before him real and artificial flowers, and asking him to decide; and the ever-ready king determined the matter by inviting to his aid a swarm of bees. Children recognize the distinction between a Christian and a non-Christian life; so do the poor, so do all plain people. There is no denial until the modern philosopher is reached, whose refined, speculative, critical spirit is almost equivalent to a paralysis of all sensibility. Differing in its supreme choice, differing in its method, differing in its results, the Christian life is an exotic. The seed of its planting, the cutting from which it springs, has been brought from another clime. Heathenism has not produced this life, nor has Mohammedanism. The virtues and graces of false religion are like the rare flowers of the century plant, not like the roses of Sharon, or the lilies of the valley. Occasionally you meet them. The starred names of that history are very few. But it is not so with Christian life. This appears whenever faith and love are manifest; and as faith and love are the universal offer of the Gospel, they appear constantly. The Spanish Jesuits

found upon the Isthmus of Panama a singularly beautiful orchid, whose flower was a delicate white cup, in which rested the form of a dove with outstretched wings. They instantly named it "Espiritu Santo,"—"The Holy Ghost." To their vivid imagination it seemed like a plant from the Garden of the Lord. The true flower of the Holy Ghost is a Christian life—pure, spotless, refined, spiritual, devout—upon the branch which has sprung from the Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and whose aspiration, like the spreading wings of a dove, is the earnest of a desire to fly away and be at rest. Is there no correspondence to this desire? Is there no rest which may meet these divinely inspired aspirations? Is man at his best—and man is surely at his best when his thought and affections go out after holiness and Heaven—a delusion and a cheat? The eye was made to see, and there is beauty all around; the ear was made to hear, and sounds innumerable bring it satisfaction; the intellect was made for truth, and truth is present to reward its thought; the heart was made for love, and friends respond to love's magnetic charms. Can it be true then that "a soul that's born of God" is mocked and doomed to bitter disappointment in its expectations of Heaven? Are these expectations vain and worthless? They meet the promise of our divine Lord. Was He, too, mistaken? "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," a splen-

did thinker once remarked, "we are of all men most miserable." He could not endure the possibility. His vigorous mind revolted against its gloom and despair. For he quickly met the demands of faith in the bold announcement: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." There can be no such disappointment. "Let God be true." When He has, by the Holy Spirit, aroused us from the deadly lethargy of sin, when He has quickened and inspired us, when He has spoken to us, by His Son, with reference to the future life, and has led us to prepare for its high and noble satisfactions, can it be that He will plunge us at death into vacuity?

Then another prophecy—and perhaps a more sure word of prophecy—appears in the incomplete progress which an earthly life secures—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." We hardly begin to live the Christian life when we die. Our best endeavors are, after all, experiments. Some one has said \* that "a tree rises from its seed, it increases for many years, it is beautiful to the eye, it yields fruit, it furnishes shade. If it were to remain here forever it could do nothing worthier or better. It has attained perfection as a tree. So an animal reaches in a short time the limit of its powers. . . .

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\* Pres. Hopkins, "Moral Science," p. 288.



It is perfect as an animal. . . . But no one can say that man reaches here his perfection. The philosopher who has traversed the circuit of human knowledge and has pitched his tent upon its outposts, not only does not approach the limits of knowledge, but what is important, he does not find his powers burdened or embarrassed by the knowledge already acquired. On the contrary, every advance which he makes gives, and from the nature of the powers must give, new light and strength to make further advances; and when old age comes he only feels himself more 'like a child gathering pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth.' " "So also, and more so, is it with the good man making progress in goodness. His path is like the shining light. Shall it shine more and more unto the perfect day, or shall it go out in darkness? Or shall he be left the only fragmentary being, as if God had completed everything else, and had failed in His grandest undertaking, as if He had, indeed, made him not the glory, but the jest and riddle of the world?" What Christian life can fail to appreciate the force of this argument? Who is not continually "reaching forth unto those things which are before"? We know that we can do better, that we can be better, and we firmly believe that the better opportunity lies beyond.

And is it not true that the Christian life witnesses to the reality of a growing desire to be very near to

Christ? Is not this the chief desire of every devoted Christian? The grand apostle, to whom we so often turn for instruction, said once: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Then he added: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." He rejoiced in Christ. His soul was thrilled at every remembrance of his Saviour's love. He was eager to know Christ better, and to love Him more. Consequently he had to check the ardor which looked eagerly toward the departure, whose open vision would be the face of Christ. We may share his expectation. There can be no Heaven to the Christian without Christ. This earth becomes heavenly when Christ becomes real. The holy hours, which emphasize the nearness of His sacred presence, are simply anticipations of that endless day when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

His presence alone is the pledge of Heaven's blessedness—"I go to prepare a place for you." That is enough. We may rest upon that promise. Do you ask me what Heaven's life is? I can only reply that it is life with Christ. Do you press me with your questions and inquire respecting locality and occupation? I can only answer that it is where Christ is, and that we shall rejoice in the occupation that He appoints. We are to be welcomed, not as guests, to stay a few days and then to depart, but as brethren to

abide forever in our Father's house on high. We need have no fears. The Christian life, here and now, is awake to every bright and noble impulse, to every cheerful recognition, to every holy service. Do you suppose, can any one suppose, that the Christian life in its perfection will be dull and stupid and inane, without sympathy, without recognition, without activity, with a ceaseless round of psalms and hymns? There is no warrant for the supposition. Christ-likeness forbids it. The perfection of living is wrapped securely in the announcement that "we shall be like Him." Oh, the rapture of that experience! Oh, the inspiration of that sublime hope! Tell us, ye angels, who are sent forth as ministering spirits, that we shall be like Christ! Tell us, ye saints, who are already safe before the throne, that we shall be like Christ! Turn the shining light of that splendid realization upon our defilement and sin. Consume our wickedness. Burn away the dross of worldliness. Refine every enduring quality. Set us free from all the corruption of this present life. Grant, O God, that the Holy Spirit may never leave nor forsake us, but preserving us blameless may present us faultless before the presence of Thy glory with exceeding joy! The consummation of Christian life is realized; the many prophecies are at last fulfilled; grace has ripened into glory. God be praised! a sinner has become a saint!

“O, then what raptured greetings  
On Canaan’s happy shore,  
What knitting severed friendships up,  
Where partings are no more !  
Then eyes with joy shall sparkle,  
That brimmed with tears of late,  
Orphans no longer fatherless,  
Nor widows desolate.”

Yes, brethren and friends, Jesus Christ is central to all hope of the future. Every speculation must yield to the confident assurances of His Word and work. When we recognize Him as Redeemer and Lord, we have a reasonable hope of immortality. How persuasive, therefore, is His appeal ! How momentous are the consequences of faith ! I am permitted to offer you all eternal life in Him. Your days on earth are numbered. In a brief time you will have passed away to be known here no more forever. Life can not be long, even if it reaches the utmost limit. We must pass from these familiar scenes and avocations. Shall we go with hope ? We may. The opportunity is ours. God grant that no one of us may reject it and thus lose eternal life.

And if we inquire concerning the best preparation for the eternal life in Heaven, we shall be urged to keep near to Jesus Christ. He is the Master and we are the servants. In His service we shall find the needed discipline. When we are ready for the heavenly occupations, He will promote us ; when we can

serve Him better there than here, His call will be heard. Let us then be faithful—faithful in our loyalty, faithful in our daily walk and conversation, faithful in every least service, and He will give the crown of life.

With increasing feebleness of body, but with no abatement of spiritual intelligence, Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, awaited the summons of his Lord. For many months he was carried in a litter as he went to meet his appointments, and thus he was admonished that the end was near. On Palm Sunday, in the year 1109, he was advised that he would probably celebrate Easter in Heaven and not on earth. "It seems so," he answered, "and I shall gladly obey His summons; yet I should also feel grateful if He would vouchsafe me a longer time with you, and permit me to solve a question in which I feel a lively interest on the origin of souls." "On the Tuesday evening his words became unintelligible." Before daybreak, at the time of the cathedral service, one of his attendants read to him from God's Word the Scripture: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink with me in my kingdom." As he heard these sweet assurances, Anselm bowed his head upon his breast, and his breathing became labored. The brethren were called. "They lifted him

from his couch, laid him on the floor on sackcloth and ashes, and knelt around him in silent prayer. As the day dawned on the 21st of April, he fell asleep in Jesus."

"So fades a summer cloud away ;  
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er ;  
So gently shuts the eye of day ;  
So dies a wave along the shore."









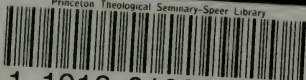
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